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EDITORIAL

IN THE SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN ANABAPTIST RESEARCH IN RECENT YEAR interest is turning more and more to Anabaptist theology and ethics. This is as it should be, for here is a large field of study that is of first importance. To be sure, the general bases of Anabaptist theology have been laid bare, but a greatly intensified study of its various aspects is a prime need. The discovery of new sources, both printed and unprinted, has greatly enlarged the base for these studies, but even the older and well-known source materials have not yet been adequately exploited. A series of significant topical theological studies is now being carried on by younger scholars, many of them in the form of doctoral dissertations, which are most promising.

The core result of one of these studies is presented in this issue by Hans Hillerbrand (Ph.D., Erlangen, 1958) under the title, "The Anabaptist View of the State." For the first time an adequate and comprehensive presentation of this major Anabaptist doctrine is thereby made available. It is in the best tradition of thorough scholarship, based on an exhaustive study of the sources, with extensive actual quotations from them. It is completely convincing. Publication of the full dissertation is to take place during 1958 in the original German form.

THE SECOND IMPORTANT ARTICLE ON ANABAPTIST THEOLOGY IN THIS ISSUE IS "The Nature of the Church According to the Radical Continental Reformation" by James Leo Garrett. As the author points out, the previous major study on the *Anabaptist View of the Church* by Littell is primarily an interpretation of Anabaptism from the point of view of its doctrine of the church, whereas the present article by Professor Garrett is an attempt to develop more fully the exposition of the doctrine itself. It is a thorough study, though not claiming finality, and one which sets the Anabaptist view in its proper perspective. The demarcation of the distinct types of church concept within the Anabaptist general group and in groups near to the Anabaptists (mainline Anabaptists, Hutterites, Münsterites, Spiritualist-Schwenkfelders) is distinctly helpful.

THE RISE OF ANABAPTISM IN ZURICH WAS DIRECTLY DUE TO THE BASIC DISAGREEMENT between Zwingli and the small group of his followers and associates led by Conrad Grebel, over the question of the relation of church and state. The uncovering of this disagreement with the consequent necessity for a decision by Zwingli about his own course of action in the matter marks not only the turning point for the Grebel group (the later Anabaptists) but for the Zwinglian Reformation itself. The precise definition of the disagreement and the dating of it are therefore matters of prime interest to both Reformed and Anabaptist historians. John Howard Yoder's careful, thorough, and acute study of this problem is reported in this issue. His conclusion, dating the break in December 1523 rather than October 23, 1523, as Blanke and Bender had done, and giving a different rationale of the event, appears convincing.

THE HISTORIC ANABAPTIST-MENNONITE POSITION OF REJECTION OF DIRECT OPERATIONAL political responsibility has been challenged from the very beginning by opponents and critics as a position of irresponsibility which an earnest Christian cannot take. It has also frequently been questioned by voices within the tradition, and abandoned in whole or in part by some considerable national and denominational Mennonite groups, especially in Europe, though maintained by most American Mennonites. Currently, as a serious re-examination of several central Anabaptist-Mennonite positions is being carried on by earnest thinkers and leaders within the tradition, the problem of "Christian Responsibility in the Political Situation" is receiving a fresh review. A major contribution to this review is the paper read by Elmer Neufeld at the recent Chicago Conference on

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THE ANABAPTIST VIEW OF THE STATE

HANS J. HILLERBRAND*

The problem of the proper relationship of the true Christian to the state has been concurrent to 19 centuries of the history of the Christian church. The New Testament view has recently become the subject of detailed analysis.¹ The early church was deeply concerned about the problem, as the thorough studies of Harnack and Cadoux have shown.² Even the Christian church of the Middle Ages, though committed by the Constantinian solutions to a new position, was not completely devoid of an awareness of the tensions that exist in a Christian's relation to the social world. The subsequent re-evaluation and gradual dissolution of the *Corpus Christianum* concept, which we customarily associate with the Reformation and the coming of the modern time, has again given prominence to this problem, which unfortunately has not resulted in a uniform and commonly accepted position within Christendom.

Recent research in the Reformation has shown that Anabaptism—frequently accused by the Reformers of civil disobedience and rebellion³—held a unique position which deserves careful study and analysis. The varied attempts in recent scholarship to focus attention on certain aspects of the Anabaptist view of the state have hardly

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1 In my doctoral dissertation, *Die politische Ethik des Oberdeutschen Täuferturns* (Erlangen, 1957), I have attempted a full analysis of the Anabaptist position. The present paper is a summary of the dissertation.

1a Oscar Cullman, *The State in the New Testament* (New York, 1956).

2 Adolf Harnack, *Militia Christi* (Tübingen, 1905); C. Cadoux, *The Early Christian Attitude to War* (London, 1919).

3 Bullinger seems to be a good illustration here; cf. Heinrich Bullinger, *Der Widertöuffern ursprung, fůrgang, Secten, wäsen . . .* (Zürich, 1561). For a modern scholarly appraisal, see Harold S. Bender, "Thomas Müntzer, the Zwickau Prophets, and the Anabaptists," *MQR* XXVII (1953), and Heinold Fast, *Bullinger und die Täufer* (unpublished dissertation, Heidelberg, 1957).

gone beyond a mere statement of the Anabaptist position or the consideration of underlying principles. While some of these studies have followed modern scholarship in their identification of evangelical Anabaptism as a distinct branch of the "left wing,"⁴ there have been others who included the Anabaptist view of the state in a discussion of the entire "left wing," making it therefore—though seemingly externally different—an integral part of the common position of the *Schwärmer*.⁵ In spite of these many partial studies, a thorough analysis has remained a desideratum.⁶

THE NATURE OF THE STATE

All Anabaptist discussions on the nature of the state commence with the significant affirmation that the office of government is ordained by God. This simple statement bears consequences for the general characterization of the Anabaptist view of the state, as it clearly establishes the fact that the Anabaptists held a position very similar to that of the Reformers in regard to the origin of governmental authority. All Anabaptist writers who deal with this issue recognize this divine ordination and are emphatic in their affirmation of it.

Ambrosius Spittelman, a South German Anabaptist, confesses that "every government that has existed since the time of Adam and exists today has been instituted by God,"⁷ and Hans Umlauf, another Anabaptist, prays for "all at whose side God has hung the sword."⁸

4 Robert Kreider, *The Swiss Anabaptists and the State* (unpublished dissertation, Chicago, 1952); Samuel Geiser, *Die Taufgesinnten-Gemeinden* (Karlsruhe, 1931); Leonhard von Muralt, *Glaube und Lehre der schweizerischen Wiedertäufer in der Reformationszeit* (Zürich, 1938); Emil Händiges, *Die Lehre der Mennoniten in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (Ludwigshafen, 1921); John Horsch, *Mennonites in Europe* (Scottsdale, 1940); W. Mannhardt, *Die Wehrfreiheit der Altpreuussischen Mennoniten* (Marienburg, 1863); Robert Kreider, "The Anabaptist View of the State," in *The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision* (Scottsdale, 1957).

5 Ulrich Bergfried, *Verantwortung als theologisches Problem im Taufertum des 16. Jahrhunderts* (dissertation, Tübingen, 1938); Karl Holl, *Luther und die Schwärmer, Gesammelte Aufsätze I* (Tübingen, 1952); Fritz Heyer, *Der Kirchenbegriff der Schwärmer* (Leipzig, 1938).

6 This has been emphasized by Georg Wünsch, *Evangelische Ethik des Politischen* (Tübingen, 1936) 204, and Heinrich Zwicker, *Gottesreich und Weltreich* (St. Gallen, 1942).

7 Karl Schornbaum, *Quellen zur Geschichte der Täufer II* (Leipzig, 1934) 52.

8 Karl Schornbaum, *Quellen zur Geschichte der Täufer V* (Gütersloh, 1951) 70. Of the numerous other Anabaptist statements only a few follow: *Quellen V*, 127, "Item von der Obrigkeit sagt er, das alle Obrigkeit die wer von God eingesetzt"; *Quellen II*, 36, "Er halt, das die obrigkeit, die itzund ist, von God sei aufgesetzt"; *ibid.*, 52, "Die obrigkeit oder gewalt ist darumb von got anfänglich eingesetzt worden"; *ibid.*, 72, ". . . sie sei nit von den menschen gesetzet sonder von Gott"; *Codex Kunstbuch*, fol. 247 b, "Einem Jeden volch hat Gott ein obreikeit veordnet"; Peter Riedemann, *Rechenschaft Unserer Religion* (Berlin, 1870) 327, "Die Oberkeit ist eingesetzt un geordnet von Gott" A.J.F. Zieglschmid, *Die älteste Chronik der Hutterischen Brüder* (New York, 1943) 307, "Darumb ist ist die Obrigkeit ein Ordnung Gottes"; *ibid.*, 387, "Sie haben In auch gefragt Woher die Obrigkeit sey, Er sagt inen, das Ampt und der gewalt ist von Gott"; *ibid.*, 433, "Wegen Ihres von Gott geordneten Ampts das inn dieser argen welt so wol von nöten ist als dz täglich Brot"; Beatrice Jenny, *Das Schleithheimer Täuferbekenntnis* (Thayingen, 1951) 31, "Das schwert ist eyn Gottis ordenung"; *Acta Des Gesprächs zwüschem predicaentenn Vnnd Tauffbruderenn Ergangen Inn der Statt Bern* . . . Im M.C. XXXVIIIten Jar, 236, "Jr bekennen das das weltlich Regiment von goot jngesetzt vnnd ein Ordnung gottes sye"; *Regensburger Stadtarchiv Eccl. I*, 52, 44, ". . . sprechen auch mit Paulo, das kain Obrigkeit sey on von Gott"; *Staatsarchiv Bern, Unnütze Papiere*, 80, Nr. 6, *Eingabe der Täufer ex 1528* "Wir wüssend und bezügen, dass ein oberkeytt von gott verordnet ist und gesetzet."

This governmental authority, which has its origin in God, is necessary for human society.⁹ The close affinity between Anabaptist thought and the Reformation finds its expression in numerous Anabaptist confessions,¹⁰ which invalidate any conflicting statements coming from the Reformers.¹¹ A rare Anabaptist voice in support of a radical view comes from Austria: "Es sei auch unser obrigkhait, die wir haben, allain vom tufl und nit von Got."¹²

The basis for the general Anabaptist position is a repeated and direct reference to the Scriptures, though pragmatic thinking may occasionally be encountered.¹³ Again and again the Anabaptists refer to the Apostle Paul and indicate that they wish to follow his words.¹⁴

According to Anabaptist thinking the origin of the state is directly related to the flood and thereby to human sin.¹⁵ The state is God's answer to human sin.¹⁶ It is an indication of God's punishment

9 Josef Beck, *Die Geschichtsbücher der Wiedertäufer in Oesterreich-Ungarn* (Wien, 1883) 170, "Sagen wir erstlich, daz ja in der welt obrigkaiten sein"; *Acta Des Gesprächs*, 254, "Es habennt die Touffbrüder gestannden, das solle vnd müsse ein Oberkeitt sin, von wegeñ der bössenn, die sich mitt dem Evangelio christi nitt lassent ziehenn, damitt jnen gewertt das die fridsamen woll mögen lebenn, sye von Nötten, das Es ein Oberkeitt sye, die söllich Straffe"; *Quellen* II, 136, "Ja, man muss obrigkeit haben von der bosen wegen, und sind alle von got geordnet, si sei bos order gut"; Zieglschmid, *op. cit.*, 307, "Denn ein Obrigkeit soll vnd muess sein in der velt vnder den Menschen So wol als das täglich Brot vnd so wol als ein Schuelmeister die rueten muess haben bey den Kinder"; *ibid.*, 433, "Wegen Ires von Gott geordneten Ampte das inn diser argen welt so wol von nöten ist als dz täglich brot"; *Quellen* II, 43, "Er halt, das under den christen gesatzte oberkait sein sollen, und das aller gewalt von got sei"; *Handlung oder Acta gehaltener Disputation und Gespräch zu Zoffingen mit den Wiedertöuffern* (Zürich, 1532) 78a, "Also bekennend wir vnd haltend das ein Oberkeit vnd Regiment vnder wält sin sol, verordnet allenthalben von Gott"; *ibid.*, 78b, "dz ein weltliche oberkeyt sin solle zu straff vnd schirm"; Leonhard von Muralt, *Quellen zur Geschichte der Täufer in der Schweiz* (Zürich, 1952) 60, "... dann er wol wüsse, das man ein oberkeit haben müsse"; Joachim von Watt, *Deutsche historische Schriften* (St. Gall, 1879) 501, "... dass oberkaiten sin söllind, ja dass si von Got hie sigend und der bruch des schwertz ordenlich und gut und von nöten si, bekennend wir."

10 Modern scholarship has repeatedly recognized this fact; cf. Georg Wünsch, *op. cit.*, 212, and Beatrice Jenny, *op. cit.* Fritz Heyer's emphasis on a "deep distinction" in this respect (*op. cit.*, 84) is probably too one-sided, especially in light of the fact that some of his sources, such as *op. cit.*, 84, note 8, are taken out of their context.

11 Felix Manz supposedly stated on governmental authority "dass die nit sin söllte"; Emil Egli, *Actensammlung zur Geschichte der Züricher Reformation* (Zürich, 1879) 310. Cf the statement about another Anabaptist who supposedly declared that "kein oberkeit sin sölle," *ibid.*, 309. Manz himself repudiated this charge, Leonhard von Muralt, *op. cit.*, 93, "das er rede oder glert habe, das man kein oberkeit sölle habenn, der thuge in gwalt und unrecht."

12 Ammann Hartmann, *Die Wiedertäufer in Michelsburg* (Brixen, 1896) 39.

13 H. Schnell, *Gründlicher Bericht aus Gottes Wort wie man die weltliche und geistliche Regiment . . .* (in Codex Geiser, typewritten copy in Mennonite Historical Library in Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana) 114, "dan wo die Oberkeit nicht war, so köndt man nicht leben und haushalten vff Erden."

14 Compare the comment that the Apostles did not teach "dz die obrigkeit nit sein soll oder mege," Lydia Müller, *Glaubenszeugnisse oberdeutscher Taufgesinnter*, 250; "Regensburger Stadtarchiv," *op. cit.*, "sprechen auch mit Paulo das kain Obrigkeit sye on von Gott"; *Handlung oder Acta*, 86b, "Vnser grund vnd anfang ist wie Rom, xij stadt vnd auch nach dem gesatz des alten Testaments dz wir bekenned ein oberkeydt syn solle"; *Aufdeckung der Babylonischen Hure* (MQR XXXII) c iij a, "so müssen sy auch durch der welt Regenten daruon Paulus Ephe. 6. redet so wider Christum streitten beherrscht werden."

15 H. Schnell, *op. cit.*, 114, "Dort ist die Oberkeit die Gott der welt nach dem Sündfluss geben"; *ibid.*, 114, "Von diesem gewalt des Schwärts, den Gott der andern neüwen welt nach dem Sündfluss geben und bewolen hat"; "Handbüchlein wider den Prozess der zu Worms am Rhein wider die Brüder so man die Hutterischen nennt ausgegangen ist im 1557. Jahr" (unpublished manuscript in Mennonite Historical Library, Goshen, Indiana) 7, "... darum er ihnen auch nach der Sündfluth Obrigkeit verordnet"; Riedemann, *op. cit.*, 328, "Darum jnen auch nach der sündflut oberkeit verordnet"; *ibid.*, 404, "Darumb gab er jhnen nach der sündfluss jre Oberheit." The similarity of the two sources is significant.

16 Compare Alfred Farner, *Die Lehre von Kirche und Staat bei Zwingli* (Tübingen, 1930), who emphasizes that for Zwingli, too, the institution of governmental authority was a necessary evil brought about by the fall. The same statement as regards Luther by Kurt Matthes, *Luther*

and shows His divine wrath.¹⁷ But it also expresses God's love, as it shows that God does not wish to lead man to the ultimate consequence of sin, but wants order and peace even among a rebellious and sinful mankind.¹⁸ The very existence of the office of government therefore points to that time when sin shall be no more—Christ's second coming and the Last Judgment.¹⁹ The Anabaptists recognized that God's grace and wrath are integral aspects of the office of government.²⁰

The state is ordained by God. The Anabaptist writers make this statement without qualification, and come to the far-reaching conclusion that even a tyrannical ruler has been ordained into his office by God. "Even Nero," says an Anabaptist, "the great tyrant with a violent, blood-thirsty mind, and Pharaoh, who tortured the children of Israel, and Pilate, who received power from above to crucify Christ—were servants of God."²¹ This statement indicates a profound understanding of the mystery that God's creation rises against the creator, but can only do so with such power as God has given. In this context it is pointed out by the Anabaptist writers that even a tyrannical government—as the Roman emperors, for example, "who shed innocent blood as if it were water"²²—maintains a minimum of peace, law and order in the world. Thereby it fulfills its task, given by God, which justifies its very existence.²³

The notion of rebellion or revolution must therefore have been

und die Obrigkeit (München, 1937) 40. Occasionally one finds in Luther the idea of a "prelapsarian" necessity of government. The question remains in what sense a distinction must be made between the flood and the fall.

17 *Handbüchlein*, *op. cit.*, II, ". . . das der Weltlichen gewalt aus Ungnad Zorn u. Rach seinen Ursprung her hat u. darum von Gott erweckt das Gott kundthut, wie den Paulus deutlich anzeigt das sie Geschier sind seines Zorns, ja zubereitet oder zu gerichtet sind zur verdammnis"; *ibid.*, 7, "Bekennen u. sagen, das die Obrigkeit u. Gewalt dieser Erden von Gott verordnet u. gestellt ist um des Volkes abtreten willen"; Riedemann, *op. cit.* 328, "Also ist offenbar, dz die oberkeit nit aus gnaden, sonder aus vgnade vnd zorn geben ist. Vnd das nach dem abker des volcks, wen sy got verliessen, vnd dem fleisch volgeten, so müst sy auch widerum fleisch beherrschen"; *ibid.*, 407, "Also sehen wir, woher erstlich der weltlich gewalt kumen, vnd was gott beweget hat den selbigen zu geben, warzu sy aber geordnet sein ist auch gesagt Nemlich zu der rach über den bösen."

19 H. Schnell, *op. cit.*, 113, ". . . vnd wird auch bleiben biss auff den letzten Tag seiner Zukunft, da Gott allen gewalt der Erden wird aufheben."

18 *Aufdeckung*, B ij b, "Also ward auch dem Mose das Schwert über die sittlichen sätzen befohlen auf das Frid vndern kindern der bossheit erhalten wurde."

20 E. Seeberg, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte I* (Leipzig, 1917) 87, considers love and wrath as the two forms of the "effectual" existence of God in the office of government.

21 H. Schnell, *op. cit.*, 116; Paul Roth, *Aktensammlung zur Geschichte der Basler Reformation* (Basel, 1921) II, 546, "Zudem bekent ouch Crystus, das der gewalt Pylaty von Got gewesen"; compare here Zwingli's remark, *Werke*, III, 881, "Non enim est potestas nisi a deo. Quid, o Paule! An Pharaonis potestas a deo erat? Nimirum! propter peccata enim nostra imponit deus pueros et effeminatos cervicibus nostris"; Zieglschmid, *op. cit.*, 306, "Der Herr nennt auch den König Nebucadnezar seinen Knecht, desgleichen den König Cyrus, Noch sindt sie nur haiden gwesen"; *Quellen zur Geschichte der Täufer*, I, 1062, "Dann wissend vil lass der schrift nach den wir nemlich seinen Knecht nennt"; compare again the interesting statement of Zwingli that Nebuchadnezzar was more devout than most people of Zwingli's time, *Scholia in Daniel*, 99.

22 H. Schnell, *op. cit.*, 117.

23 Peter Riedemann, *op. cit.*, 327, "Wo es aber misshandelt wirt, so ist . . . der selbig vnbraucht vnrecht, das ampt aber bleibt nichtz des weniger, wie es geordnet ist."

utterly foreign to the Anabaptist mind,²⁴ and we can consider essentially non-Anabaptist all groups of the "left wing" of the Reformation which advocated either in principle or practice the overthrow of existing governmental order. Such an overthrow would presuppose a qualitative distinction between a "good" and a "bad" government. Nowhere in Anabaptist literature is such a distinction made. A good government is therefore never so "good" that it conforms to God's ultimate revelation in Jesus Christ; and a "bad" government, on the other hand, is never so bad that it would cease to be a servant of God.²⁵

THE TASKS OF THE STATE

The essence of the governmental office is its function of maintaining order. Human sin would make orderly living together impossible, were it not for this power. It has to "punish the bad, to protect and cover the pious."²⁶ This task of governmental power is two-fold. First, it punishes evildoers. Positively this implies protection for the weak. At the Franckenthal disputation of 1571 an Anabaptist speaker referred to governmental authority as a "friedhalterin"; its position is compared to that of a fence placed by the owner of a garden between his good fruit and the wild beasts. The government serves likewise: it protects the law-abiding citizens from the evil ones.²⁷ This makes its office a blessing.²⁸ As a hindrance of evil, government is a good order in the world; the exercise of governmental

24 One of the earliest and most emphatic Anabaptist sources is Grebel's letter to Thomas Müntzer, Leonhard von Muralt, *Quellen*, 20, "Wellist darvon abstan und allem gutdenken ietz und hernach, so wirst du gar rein werden."

25 It is therefore regrettable that Lowell H. Zuck's article in *Church History* XXVI, 3, "Anabaptism: Abortive Counter-Revolt Within the Reformation," should once more echo the old contention that "the first Anabaptists were revolutionary in attitude and act." The evidence advanced by Zuck is greatly insufficient, as it is based almost exclusively on Müntzer, Hofmann, and Rothmann. His interpretation of Menno must be considered unsatisfactory. Hans Weischenfelder's testimony of Hans Hut is not sufficient to clear up the still obscure position. Hut's "Urgicht" of Augsburg, as published by Meyer, "Zur Geschichte der Wiedertäufer in Oberschwaben," *Zeitschrift d. Hist. Vereins f. Schwaben und Neuburg*, I (1874) 228, seemingly indicates that his political view of the state coincides with that of the Reformers. To add further uncertainty, the Hutterite chronicle pictures Hut as having an opposing view (Zieglschmid, *op. cit.*, 30).

26 Claus Felbinger's Confession, *MQR* XXIX (1955) 195; R. Steck, *Aktensammlung zur Geschichte der Berner Reformation* (Bern, 1922) 1041, "Er bekennt, dass sy von gott ingesetzt, das böss ze straffen und guts ze pflanzen"; *Regensburger Stadtarchiv*, *op. cit.*, "... damit die frumen vnnter yr im frid erhalten, die bösen aber durch sy gezüchtigt werden, die weil sy ain dienerin Gottes zur racht verordnet ist"; *Handlung oder Acta*, 97 a, "Nach der ordnung des alten Testaments findent jr wol das die wältlichen ein semliches regiment führen, das böss zustraffen, vnnd das gut zeschirmen wie es ouch Christus zulässt. Matth. v. vnd xxj"; C. A. Cornelius, *Geschichte des Münsterischen Aufruhrs* (Leipzig, 1860) 269, "Bekenne, dass der weltlich oberkeit das schwert den bösen zur straf und den guten zur ufbawung geben und befohlen ist"; *Staatsarchiv Bern*, "... dass gutt zu pschirmen und das bess zu straffen, uf das wir in frid und einigkeytt mügen by ein andren wandlen, sunst wurde bald ein merdergruben us der welt."

27 *Quellen* IV, 190.

28 *Regensburger Stadtarchiv*, "... verordnet zum frid menschlichen lebens"; *Aufdeckung der Babylonische Hure*, B iij a, "... auss der ordnung des getrewen Gottes, der des verfallen flaisches eigenschafft erkannt vnd wusste das ausser der leiblichen forschet allda nit fride würd sein"; R. Steck, *op. cit.*, 1042, "Sy e userwelt von oben herab, inen das schwert bevolchen, die armen zu erkennen, wittwen und weysen zu beschirmen und die guten handthaben."

power and authority is proper, good, and necessary.²⁹ That God has instituted this power shows "wolgünnen und lieb Gottes zu den Menschen,"³⁰ it shows His grace and mercy.³¹ An Anabaptist confession of faith of 1571 declares that the office and power of the government were instituted by God and ordained by divine Providence for the good of mankind,³² and the unknown author of the *Aufdeckung der Babylonischen Hure* confesses:

Erstlich der Obrigkeit halben das wir dieselbig nach den Worten des heiligen Apostels Rom. 13. für diener Gottes Inn der welt halten vnnnd das sie seyen ein notwendige guete Gottes ordnung Zur straff des bösen vnnnd schutz des gueten.³³

For Anabaptist thinking, such power and authority of government includes the right over life and death of its people.³⁴ Aside from direct sources, however rare, this can be deduced also from the general Anabaptist understanding of the office of government. The resolute Anabaptist rejection of any participation in governmental office is only fully understandable if the taking of life is understood as an integral part of this office.³⁵

To the student of Reformation history and the thought of Luther and Zwingli it is apparent that the Anabaptist view of the nature of the state, as sketched in these paragraphs, concurs almost entirely with the political ethics of the Reformation. This significant fact, long suspected by the proponents of modern Anabaptist scholarship, constitutes the first important finding of our study and should make possible disapproval of all insistence that the Anabaptist attitude involved a basic negation of the governmental order.

29 Joachim Watt, *op. cit.*, 501, "ordenlich und gut und von nöten"; H. Schnell, *op. cit.*, 114, "eine gute Ordnung in der Welt"; Lydia Müller, *op. cit.* 252, "ist ein notwendige guete ordnung in der welt unter denen, die Gott nicht fürchten"; *Quellen Hessen*, 339, "Glaubt er, das die oberkeit von got geordnet nützlich und gut sei"; *Quellen* II, "Hat er geantwürt, der weltlich obrigkeit ist gut."

30 *Aufdeckung*, B ii b.

31 *ibid.*, B ii a.

32 *Quellen Hessen*, 427, "... das das ampt vnd der gewalt der oberkeit von Gott ingesetzt und dem menschlichen geschlecht zu gut durch göttlich fursehung geordnet, geregirt und erhalten wirt, doch nit anders dan das sie als diener gottes söllend das gut handhaben, den frommen beschützen und das böse und den ubelthäter strafen."

33 A. J. F. Zieglschmid, *op. cit.*, 523.

34 The *Schleitheim Confession* describes the task of the government as "welches den bösen strafft vnd todet," Jenny, *op. cit.*, 114, "von Gott gelehrt Rach zu geben, die blutschuldigen vnd Mörder zu tödten."

35 It is therefore not too easily possible to claim that the Anabaptists rejected capital punishment, as Kurt Goldammer, "Friedensidee und Toleranzgedanke bei Paracelsus," *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte* XLVII (1956) 46, 26, suggests. Possibly we encounter here another distinction between Anabaptism and Spiritualism. However, this problem needs further study. Cf. Balthasar Hubmaier, *Von dem Schwert*, B. i, "das sy solle die frommen bschützen vnd bschirmen auch die bösen straffen vnd vmb bringen." A contrasting statement is found in *Quellen Zürich*, 335, "Vnnnd die weil dann Cristus nit allein im allten Gesetz zehen gepotten, sunder ouch euangeli an ziemlich gnug orten verpotten, das man nyemands tödten, halte er, das eyn oberkeit mit keynem cristischen gemüt weder mörder noch dieben tödten, aber die lut nach der worten Pauli zwüschen die wend legen vnnnd biss zu bekerung verworren sölle." It should be mentioned, however, that the speaker of these words held a view of the state similar to that of the Reformation.

THE LIMITATIONS OF THE STATE

It is only in the area of the limitations of governmental power that we encounter the initial discrepancy between Anabaptism and the Reformers. For the Anabaptists such limits are closely related to their understanding of the tasks of governmental authority. The focal point of their position is the spiritual realm, where government possesses no jurisdiction.

This is evident as early as October 1523, on the occasion of the second disputation in Zürich: Grebel's challenge to continue discussion of the abuses of the Mass is met by Zwingli's response that this matter falls within the authority of the City Council.³⁶ H. S. Bender considers this the first essential break between the Grebel group and Zwingli.³⁷ Later, Conrad Grebel affirms his willingness to be obedient in all temporal affairs, which evidently would exclude the spiritual realm from the jurisdiction of the City Council.³⁸ At the Zofingen disputation an Anabaptist spokesman said that one may be disobedient in such matters as concern the inner man. In other matters obedience is practiced.³⁹

So man ihm die Oberkeit über sins üsserlichen (von innen herus gewirkten) Sachen satzt, deren Amt dann, nach Bruch Christi Worten Matth. 20 äusserlich mit Gewalt fahren, herrschen, gebieten, und verbieten ist, wie kanns dann on sin, dess sie sich nit in die Gewissen mit Gebieten und Verbieten inlassen, und dass äusserlich, das von innen vom Herzen, Consciencz und Gewissen heraus geflossen, also mit Zwang und Drang beherrschen.⁴⁰

A government attempting to rule the hearts of men is overstepping its functions and tasks.⁴¹ Christ alone is the Lord of man's conscience.⁴² The Anabaptist understanding of baptism as the free and

³⁶ Zwingli Werke, II, 783 ff.

³⁷ Harold S. Bender, Conrad Grebel (Goshen, 1950) 94 ff. Bender follows here the interpretation of John Horsch, "The Faith of the Swiss Brethren," MQR IV (1930) 255 ff. More recently a further elaboration was undertaken by John H. Yoder, "The Anabaptist Dissent," *The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision* (Scottsdale, 1957) 93-104. Yoder feels that the initial clash between the Swiss Brethren and Zwingli is a conflict between Biblicism and Humanism. His interpretation is doubtless somewhat inadequate. While humanist influences in Zwingli must no doubt be conceded—cf. Arthur Rich, *Die Anfänge der Theologie Huldrych Zwinglis* (Zürich, 1949) *passim*—it seems that the difference between the two parties must be sought in a conflicting understanding of the Scriptures: If Zwingli grants to the City Council certain jurisdiction in carrying out the Reformation in Zürich, this has its cause in his particular understanding of the Scriptures. Cf. Fritz Blanke, "The First Anabaptist Congregation," MQR XXVII (1953) 31.

³⁸ *Quellen Zürich*, 175, "Wölle sunst minen herren ghorsam sin inn allennn anderen weltlichen dingenn"; cf. *Quellen Hessen*, 227, "Aber so die oberkeit das schwert nit recht brauche, wolle er nit gehorsam sein."

³⁹ *Handlung oder Acta*, 83 b.

⁴⁰ *Apologia der Wiedertheuffren an h. Obrekheit der Stadt Bern usw.* (n.p., n.d.), manuscript copy in Goshen College Library; *Quellen* II, 26, "Aber von dem wort Gottes wollen sie sich nit durch fürstlichen gepot, die wider gott sei, abtrinken lassen machen."

⁴¹ *Regensburger Stadtarchiv*, "Wo die Obrigkeit auss irer ordnung träte, vnd wider Gott vnd sein warhait vnser gewissen regiren anordnen vnd beherrschen wolten, welches alain des geists Jesu Christi ist, da widern wir vns alles gehorsams."

⁴² *Ibid.*, "derhalb sagen wir ainfeltiglich, das wir aller Obrigkeit von Gott, daruntter wir hie auff erden wonen vnd leben, gehorsam erscheinen wollen wie obgemeld, aber biss auff das gewissen, welches wir vnserm Herrn Jesu Christo gefreiet haben, daruber wir auch keinen andern gwalt herren vnd richter sein lassen kunnen." *Quellen* II, 38, "Er sei wider die weltlich obrigkeit nit, dann der soll man nach der lere Cristi geben, was ir zusteet, aber was die

uncompelled decision of the individual to follow Christ is closely related to this problem. It restates the conviction that faith cannot be compelled.⁴³

The question of the relationship of this position to the views held by the Reformers arises here. It is known that the Reformers also held the belief that true faith cannot be compelled.⁴⁴ However, this principle was never understood in the absolute sense that a government *eo ipso* lacks the authority to function in the spiritual realm. On the contrary, the state was *defensor fidei* and therefore possessed certain functions.^{44a} According to Reformation thought it was possible for the individual to possess his own private faith. However as soon as he publicly upheld such belief, he had to leave the country.⁴⁵ The authority of the state to regulate in its territory the external, and thereby in a real sense the internal faith, was never questioned by the Reformers.⁴⁶ The presence of dissenters would imply civil disorder. This danger of civil disorder was one of Zwingli's major accusations against the Anabaptists.⁴⁷ It is in the conflict between the Reformers and Anabaptism that the inherent principle of Protestantism was first and decisively challenged: the problem of the absence of objective authority as a category in Protestant thought. Thus Luther never recognized the validity of the Anabaptists' claim of freedom to follow the dictates of their conscience, even though this was precisely what he had claimed for himself.⁴⁸

The Anabaptist position embodies a concept of religious liberty which is the most advanced of the Reformation era.⁴⁹ If the member-

seelen oder menschen gewissen betreffen, darüber sollen sie nichtss zu gebieten haben," *Quellen zur Geschichte der Täufer, Elsass* (Manuscript copy in Goshen College Library), "Der Obrigkeit nit gestehen wollen, das sie über glauben gesetz oder gewalt darüber habe."

43 Cf. Franklin Littell, *The Anabaptist View of the Church*, 64 ff.

44 Cf. Zwingli *Werke* III, 437, "Also ist kundtlich, dass ghein zwang den glouben velschen mag, wo er ist"; for Luther, cf. *WA XXX*, II, 401, 9 ff., 264.

44a John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion II* (Philadelphia, 1936) 772, defines the tasks of the state "to cherish and support external worship of God, to preserve the pure doctrine of religion, to defend the constitution of the church, to regulate our lives in a manner requisite for the society of man, to form our manners to civil justice, to promote our concord with each other, and to establish general peace and tranquility."

45 Alfred Farner has rightly pointed out that this principle was in effect in Zürich as early as 1525, *op. cit.*, 88. This modifies a statement made earlier by Karl Holl, *op. cit.*, 484.

46 Both Farner, *op. cit.*, 88, and Holl, *op. cit.*, 485, claimed that nobody was ever punished by the Reformation on account of his faith. As any belief must manifest and realize itself in certain external matters which fell under the jurisdiction of governmental authority there is no evidence of religious freedom in the Reformation.

47 Cf. Alfred Farner, *op. cit.*, 86 ff.

48 On Luther's concept of tolerance, cf. Johannes Kühn, *Toleranz und Offenbarung* (Leipzig, 1923).

49 In spite of the thorough studies by Bainton, Hermelinck, Lecler, etc., there is still no general consensus in historical scholarship on the relationship between the Reformation and religious liberty. This applies also to the specific problem of the Anabaptist attitude: Recently Harold S. Bender, "The Anabaptists and Religious Liberty in the 16th Century," *MQR* XXIX (1955) emphasized the Anabaptist contribution and suggested several bases for the Anabaptist position. Others, like Heinrich Hermelinck, *Der Toleranzbegriff im Reformationszeitalter* (Leipzig, 1908), and more recently Lowell Zuck, *op. cit.*, p. 223, emphatically denied any significant Anabaptist contribution and on the contrary referred to them as the "most intolerant" Reformation group.

Unfortunately, this disagreement seems largely the result of a somewhat unprecise terminology, as "religious liberty" and "tolerance"—two terms that have often been used inter-

ship of the individual in a congregation is to be decided solely by that individual, then the possibility of several conflicting decisions has to be recognized, and religious pluralism allowed. According to Anabaptist thinking there is no necessity for governmental authority to exert jurisdiction in this regard to bring about external uniformity. Even Turks and Jews should be left alone to live according to their faith—a truly revolutionary position for the sixteenth century.⁵⁰ Felix Manz said that the Zürich City Council should “let the others stay by their faith” (*die anderen irs gloubens lassenn plibenn*).⁵¹ And the unknown author of the Anabaptist hymn refers to the example of Christ:

Christus thut niemand zwingen
zu seiner Herrligkeit,
Allein wirts dem gelingen
der willig ist bereyt.⁵²

OBEDIENCE TO GOVERNMENTAL AUTHORITY

Undoubtedly the most common charge against the Anabaptists was that they were planning civil rebellion. Even Zwingli, who, because of his long acquaintance with Grebel and his followers, should have been thoroughly acquainted with their goals, stated:

Und uss dem allem konne er nudts anders ermessen, dann das das schlechtlich ir entliche meinung sige, das sy damit habind understanden iren hufen ze meren, damit sy sich der oberkeit entseggenn möchtind.⁵³

This attitude may have had its reason in the radical elements with which the Anabaptists were always and immediately identified. The constant Anabaptist affirmations of obedience were of little avail.

changeably—do not necessarily connote the same thing. “Tolerance” should be understood as referring to the attitude one holds towards one’s fellow man. How does he feel about the differing religious views? Does he recognize him as a brother? “Religious liberty,” on the other hand, seems to deal more with the problem of governmental interference in matters of faith and religion. It should be understood as the freedom to live, undisturbed by the state, according to one’s faith; cf. Heinrich Hoffmann, “Reformation und Gewissensfreiheit,” *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*, XXXVII (1940) 170. In this context it soon becomes evident that there is substantial reason why “tolerance” would arise in Western Civilization in the Age of Enlightenment with its emphasis on natural religion. As regards “religious liberty,” it needs to be pointed out that the positive position of Anabaptism is strong and unequivocal, Lowell Zuck’s recent assertion notwithstanding.

50 Cf. Abraham Hulshof, *Geschiedenis van de Doopsgezinden te Straatsburg van 1525 tot 1557* (Amsterdam, 1905) 247, “Ich wais auch das nymer mer recht ist einen im glauben zu nottigen, er glaub wie er woll, es sey Jud oder Turck, auch so ainer nicht rechtgeschaffen glaubt noch glauben will. . . . Und halten wir uns nach ebenbild Christi uns seiner apostelen und verkundigen das Evangelion nach der gnad, die er uns vertraut hat, dringen niemand”; Hans Denck, *Micha der Prophet usw.*, fol. 54 a, “Das auch je einer den andern, er sei Türck oder heyd glaub was er wöll, sicher wirt lassen ziehen vnnnd wonen, durch vnd inn seim landt. . . . Er soll keyner den andern, daz einer eyn heyd, ein jud, oder Christ were, lassen entgelte under durch alle landt ein jeglichen im namen seines Gots vergunnen zuo ziehen.”

51 *Quellen Zürich*, 216.

52 *Ibid.*, 221; cf. A. J. F. Zieglschmid, *Kleingeschichtsbuch der Hutterischen Brüder* (Philadelphia, 1947) 167, “Dann ir missbraucht also den Gwalt den Gott geordnet hat, zu beschützen die frommen vnd zur straff der übeltheter vnd nit über den glauben dann demselben steet allein der Herr Christus vor zu regieren (vnd nit der Babst oder weltlich gwalt) Welcher Herr denn niemand will gezwungen oder genöttiget Ja noch bil weniger vmbs glaubens willen yemandt getödt haben als yetzt di welt thuet.”

53 Zwingli’s Werke, *Corpus Reformatorum*, 91, 173.

As late as 1557, after decades of severe persecution had reduced the Anabaptist movement to practical insignificance, the charge of *auf-rührerische Lehren* remained.⁵⁴ The benevolent view of such an impartial observer as Sebastian Franck was without substantial influence.⁵⁵

The basis for obedience to governmental authority is the particular Anabaptist understanding of the nature of government; since it has been instituted by God it has also been empowered to ask obedience from its people.⁵⁶ Five basic reasons summarize the Anabaptist willingness to be obedient to governmental authority:

(1) Obedience to the state is one aspect of the more general obedience to God which is required of every Christian. Thus obedience assumes a dimension of gratitude toward God, who through the ordination of the office of government has shown His love toward mankind.⁵⁷ Disobedience against the state is disobedience against God.⁵⁸

(2) The basis for such obedience is the command of the Scriptures: "Dan die schrift weise inen dahin, da er der oberkeit gehorsam sein soll."⁵⁹ The Scriptures point out that Jesus, too, was obedient to human government.⁶⁰ Only what is grounded in the Scriptures, therefore, can be carried out with good conscience.

(3) Just as the Anabaptist view of the nature of the state makes no qualitative distinction between a good or bad government, so their willingness to be obedient to temporal authority is independent

⁵⁴ *Quellen* I, 162; occasionally differences were recognized within the "left wing," such as the *Kirchenordnung des Pfalzgrafen Wolfgang*, *Quellen* IV, 264 ff.

⁵⁵ Sebastian Franck, *Chronica, Zeytbuch vnd Geschycht-Bibel* (Strassburg, 1531) ccccxlix, "Ich besorg mich vor keynem volck weniger eyner auffrur, wann ich Babst, Keyser vnd der Turk selbs wer, dann vor diesem."

⁵⁶ *Quellen* Hessen, 428, "Wir gleuben, erkennen und bekennen, das die untertanen der oberkeit den gehorsam schuldig sein"; *Quellen* II, 89, "Der Hut hat gesagt, man soll der obrigkeit geben, was man ir schuldig"; *Handlung oder Acta*, 104 a, "Gbürt vns ouch nach dem glevsch vnder dz schwärdt zu wärfen nach d'ordnung gottes, angäsehen zu straff des bösen vnd schyrm des guten. Das ist vnser gehorsame wie sv ouch die Apostel gleert da die erst kilch jre vrsprung hehebt hat"; Joachim Watt, *op. cit.*, 501, ". . . sind wir unbietig aller oberkait in allem dem, dess si nit embären will, so ferr es der pflicht, die wir God schuldig, nit wider ist. Und ob sie uns schon beroub und zu armut bringt wider billichs und rechtz, so tragend und duldend wirs, wan wir sölicher beschwerd on verlezung oder ufruf nit alsin könnend."

⁵⁷ *Aufdeckung*, B ij b, "Vnnd auss diesem wolgünnen und lieb zu den menschen sein auch schuldig vmb der lieb willen die waren Christen als Gotteskinder dem ausswenigen gewalt alle ghorsam vnd vnderthenigkeit zubeweisen biss in den leiblichen tod."

⁵⁸ *Eine kurtze einfaltige erkanntnuss vff die dry zehen artikell so verlouffen 1572. Jars zu Franckenthal In der pfaltz disputiert worden* (n.p., 1590) 132, "Darum ist die Oberkeit ein ordnung Gottes, die wir ouch billich vom ampts wegen gern in Ehren halten vollend, jnen liebs vnd guts bewysen, ouch Inen in allem, was nitt wider Gott ist."

⁵⁹ *Quellen* Hessen, 227; note 60, *Aufdeckung*, A iij, "Dan Christus ist vnter allem gewalt hat sich keines gewalts nie verwidert also auch noch heut nicht verwidern"; *Acta oder Handlung etc.*, 86 b, "Christus hat sin volck im nüwen Testament gefryet doch dz sy sich der ordnung des vatters nit widerigen sonder wie Paulus vn Petrus leert der oberkeyt gehorsam sin söllent"; Christian Meyer, *op. cit.*, 227, "Uff den 59. articul: sie halten, wie Paulus vnnd Christus anzaigen, das man den oberkaiten gehorsamen sein solle"; *ibid.*, 228, "Das sy solks, diweil sy under der oberkait sein wolten, zu thun schuldig wern, wie auch Christus gethan und sich under die oberkeit begeben hete, wa sy aber solks nit thun woltenm möchten sie verkauffen, was sy hetten und weck ziehen"; *Handlung oder Acta*, 78 a, "Hierinn leert Petrus die glöubigen darumb das sv fry syend worden durch das blut Jesu Christi das sy sich darumb nit söllend widerigen der ordnung Gottes in denen dingen die dem Euangelio gemäss sind."

of the moral character of a state.⁶¹ For it is not fear of punishment which motivates such obedience, but the Christian's conscience striving to fulfill the will of God.⁶²

(4) The limits of Anabaptist obedience are related to the understanding of the legitimate functions of any government. Since these functions embrace only the exercise of public law and order, no obedience can be asked for in the spiritual realm. If it is required, it can—according to Anabaptist thinking—legitimately be refused.⁶³

(5) Such limits of obedience are of a passive nature. This implies the passive refusal of obedience and rules out emphatically any active rebellion or revolution against the existing order.⁶⁴ This aspect forms the sharp line of distinction between Anabaptism and the radical factions of the "left wing."

PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENTAL OFFICES

Of basic importance for the Anabaptists was the question as to whether a Christian could occupy a governmental office? Could a

61 Joachim Watt, *op. cit.*, 501, "Bekennend wir und sagend mit Paulo Röm. 13, dass alle menschlichen der oberkeit ghorsam oder underton sind söllind, nit allain der geschlachten und fridlichen, sondern ouch der tyrannischen, um der ursach willen, dass aller gwalt uss Gottes verhengnuss hie ist"; *Regensburger Stadtarchiv*, "Wir haben oben vrkund geben, das wir nit alein den geschlachten sonder ouch den vngschlachten Obern vnd gewaltigen ghorsam sein wollen, in allen billichen sachen, so weit vns Gottes geist den ghorsam lernt, biss auf das gewissen, damit nit ir vnghorsam und vbertretung uns zu sundern machen, vn wir beide in gleiches urteil der straff Gottes fielen"; Peter Riedemann, *op. cit.*, 327, "Darumb ist auch das ampt zu Eeren. Denn ob es gleich gottlose innen haben, so wird doch das ampt darumb nit aufgehoben"; Leonhard Dax, "Refutation und gruendliche Widerlegung Christ-Welt: Anschlag und Fuerwenden . . . gestellt auf 26 Artickel: Die Brüder die man die Hutterischen nennt" (n.p., 1561, typewritten manuscript at Wheathill Bruderhof, England) 31, "Vnd wie woll sie ihren Amt undt Standt nach untreuulich vorstehn, indem dz sie vill mer die fromen Gottes kinder beleidigen, will geschweigen iren Amt nach schützen undt schuermen sollen, jedoch so sagt Christus undt auch Gott was wir dann schuldig sein leisten sollen."

62 *Handlung oder Acta*, *op. cit.*, 104 a, "Man sol aber jnen vmb der gwüssne willen gehorsam sin gegen Gott."

63 Zieglschmid, *op. cit.*, 307, "Vnser will vnd Sinn ist nit, ein weltlich Obrigkeit abzuthuen. Oder ir nit ghorsam zu sein im guten vnd billichen"; Staatsarchiv Bern, "Unnütze Papiere" 80, "sind auch des erbitig aller menschlichen oberkeytt underwürlich und ghorsam ze sein, was lib und gutt antrifft"; *Quellen* II, 72, "Darum was gespiet, sol man halten. Aber was wider den christen glauben und der seligkeit sei, das heis er nit"; *Quellen Hessen*, 45, "Item er sagt ouch, obrigkeit sol man gehorsamen leisten, so vern das sie nicht wider got gebiten tue"; *ibid.*, 380, "Wenn sie mich heist das ich tun soll, so tue ichs, Heist sie mich was böses, so soll ichs lassen"; *ibid.*, 94, "Ich will der oberkeit gehorsam sein, wo es nicht wider got ist: Summa: Ich will vorhin wissen, ob sie fuge habe oder nit, ehe dann ich gehorsam were"; *ibid.*, 197, "Ich will aller oberkeit undertan sein in alle dem, das nit wider gott ist, zu liebe und zu leide gleich wie ein ander fromme burger"; Zieglschmid, *Chronik*, 433, "Der weltlichen Obrigkeit war man Vanderthenig vnd Gehorsam zu gueten werken Was nit wider Gott widern Glauben oder gewissen war"; Beck, *Geschichtsbücher*, 251, "Das man der Obrigkeit in Allem Gehorsam schulde, was nicht gegen Gottes ist"; *Quellen* IV. 357, "Vnd souil die oberkheit belangt sagt er, das sey verr von innen vnnnd so sie merketenn das ainer vnder innen diss zu thon willens, thon sie den von innen ausschliessen, darfts kheiner dencken, zu geschweigen wider die oberkheit zeratschlagen."

64 *Quellen Hessen*, 394, "Wan sie zusammen komen, . . . bitten vor die oberkeit, vor ihre feinde, die sie verfolgen, und alle menschen, das sie from werden und sich bekeren; sein bekentnus werde ausweisen, ob sie ufruhr gegen die oberkeit anrichten wollen oder nicht . . . Sie bitten Gott, dass sie unter der oberkeit in einem fridlichen stillen leben wonen mogen"; Pilgram Marbeck, *Vermanung in Gedenkschrift zum 500-jährigen Jubiläum* (Ludwigshafen, 1925) 280, "Wa aber oder wann der weltlich und zeitlich gewalt etwas gebeut wider Gott und die gewissen, das sie durch gedult darüber leiden biss in todt, das heysst Gott geben was Gottes ist, und dem keyser was des keyzers ist"; for the report of an impartial observer cf. Sebastian Franck, *op. cit.*, cccclix, "Sie seien auch bereyt gewalt zuleiden, vnd auch den Tyrannen ghorsam zusein, weil Paulus Rom. xiii. da er die gehorsamme anzeucht, von der Heydnischen oberkeyt, als Calligula, Tiberio, vnnnd Nerone rede, der man soll ghorsame leysten."

government or an office of government be truly Christian? Are the principles underlying the governmental office basically compatible with those principles of the Gospel which are imperative for every Christian? The Anabaptist answer to these three questions was an emphatic "No" in each instance.

It must not be assumed that this problem was a merely theoretical one for sixteenth-century Anabaptism. In the light of the socioeconomic background of many of the early Anabaptists the statement seems justified that it was as pertinent a question as was the issue of nonparticipation in warfare. Men like Grebel, Manz, and Marbeck, to name only a few, did indeed have the necessary prerequisites to hold a government office.^{64a}

The emphatic Anabaptist affirmation that no true Christian can participate in a government position, must be seen—in the light of its early existence and uncompromising representation—as one of the major points of the "Anabaptist Vision." One of the earliest testimonies about the faith of the Zürich Swiss Brethren, dated in the fall of 1525, calls attention to the Anabaptist belief that "alle die so gricht und rat besitzind, die megind nit Christen sin."⁶⁵ Sometime later the court sentence against Felix Manz states that Manz had "ouch für die warheit gelert . . . das dhein Christ dhein oberer sin."⁶⁶ These testimonies constitute a major rejection of the close identification of church and state so prevalent in Western Christendom since the Constantinian solution of the fourth century.

In a way this attitude implied a distinct devaluation of the office of government, which was especially serious in the light of the close co-operation between the Reformers and their respective governments. For many decades the charge persisted against the Anabaptists that they were unwilling to recognize the governmental office as a Christian vocation.⁶⁷ Many Anabaptist leaders, such as Felix Manz, had responded early to these charges, recognized their validity, but called attention to the basic justification for the Anabaptist position:

64 a The exhaustive list for the Swiss Anabaptists, as published by Paul Peachey in his doctoral dissertation, *Die soziale Herkunft der Schweizer Täufer* (Karlsruhe, 1954), shows conclusively the relative importance of "upper class" for the early Anabaptist movement. This study somewhat invalidates the remarks by Winfield Fretz, *Mennonite Life*, July 1956, 139.

65 *Quellen Zürich*, 123.

66 *Ibid.*, 225.

67 *Quellen* I, 149, "Von weltlicher oberkeit bekennen sie wol, dass sie von gott eingesetzt und geordnet, das ubel zu strafen, das sie aber ein christ sein könnte oder möge, geben sie nit zue"; *ibid.*, 175, Von weltlicher Obrigkeit halten sie . . . dass es kein christlicher Stand sei"; *Bernhard Wyss, Chronik*, ed. Georg Finsler (Basel, 1901) 79, "Vermeinten kein Christ möcht kein oberer sin und sollte man ouch niemandt tödten"; Johannes Kessler, *Sabbata*, ed. Ernst Goetzinger (St. Gall, 1870) 263, "Do entstund der ander artickel under inen, das sy uffbrachend es mög kain weltlich obrigkeit christen sin oder kain christ mög ein oberer sin, dan die christen habend kainen gwalt anderst dann den ban oder usschliessen, von welchem Christus rede, Mathe. 18."

das sin meynung allweg gewässen und noch sig, das dhein crist ein oberer sin und nit mit dem schwert richten noch jemans todenn noch straffen solt, dann *er darumb dhein geschriff hette*.⁶⁸

This position is confirmed numerously by other Anabaptist testimonies.⁶⁹

Four major reasons are given for the Anabaptist position:

(1) There is in the Scriptures no evidence for a true Christian's participation in government.⁷⁰

(2) The example of Christ himself speaks against participation. "Wenn der weltlich Gewalt und Obrigkeit Christen sein wollen, So müsten Sie eigentlich die Natur und Art des Lebens Christi sich beweisen und halten."⁷¹ Frequently the example is cited of how Christ fled when the crowd wanted to make him king.⁷² If Christ is to be our example, said an Anabaptist spokesman at the Zofingen debate, we must follow His footsteps under the cross: Christ did not rule the people.⁷³ A classical exposition of the Anabaptist position is found in the Schleithem Confession:

Was Christus vnser haupt auff vnns gesinnet ist, das alles sollen die glieder dess leips Christi durch jn gesinnet sein, damit keyn spaltung

68 *Quellen* Zürich, 216.

69 *Ibid.*, 354, "Er geloube ouch nitt, das ein crist ein oberer solle sin": *Quellen* I, 179, "Er könne die Obrigkeit nicht als christlich anerkennen"; *ibid.*, 1062, "Denn die weltlich oberkait hat iren bestand ausser dem reich Christi und gottes"; *Quellen* IV, 530, "Zum vierden sagt er, dass alle oberkaiten, so heischen wellen und mit gwalt faren, heyden sygen"; *Codex Kunstbuch*, Bürgerbibliothek Bern 247 b, "Es zyme dem Christen nit ein Obrigkeit zu sein"; Johann Loserth, "Zur Geschichte der Wiedertäufer in Mähren," *Zeitschrift für Allg. Geschichte*, 1884, 453, "Das ein weltliche Obrigkeit nit mag ein crist sein"; *Aufdeckung*, D a, "Die waren Christen werden sich der freyhait (es seyn böss oder frum zubeherrschten vnd regieren) zu kainen gwalt oder Obrigkeit nicht vnderstehen, sonder werden sich beherrschen regieren vnd bewältigen lassen inn der gedult vnd lieb biss zum ende der welt"; *Handlung oder Acta*, 90 b, "Das die obern ouch mogend Christen sin, darous manklet vns vn findt sich nit"; *Die Predigen so vonn den frombden Predicanten . . . Verwerffen der Artickeln vnd Stucken so die Wider-touffer . . .* (Zürich, 1528) N viij b, "Hie sprachend etlich vnder jnen zu Bern, es möge kein Christ ein oberkeit sin, oder an der gwalt sitzen"; Hans Denck, *Von der wahren lieb* (n.p., 1526) b iiiij b, "Mit gwalt faren vnd herrschen ist gantz keynem Christen erlaubt, der sich seins Herrn berümen will."

70 Leonhard Dax, *op. cit.*, 31, "Dz wir aber die Obrigkeit fuer Christen Erkoenen sollen, dz wer uns ein Torlich Ding dieweil wie Paulus sagt: Rach Boten sindt, undt wie aus Hosea gehert aus Gottes ungnadt verordnet seindt, Christus aber aus Gnad von vater in die welt gesent."

71 *Handbüchlein wider den Prozess* 9; *Handlung oder Acta*, *op. cit.*, 83 a, "Ouch sagt Christus selbs Joan. xv. Habend sy mich verfolget So werdend sy üch ouch verfolgen: das ist offenbare Kundschaft das kein oberkeit vnder den Christen syn wirt."

72 *Handbüchlein*, *op. cit.*, 9, "Ja vielmehr da er merket dass Volk zu ihm kommen wolt und ihn erwischen, dass sie ihm zum König machten. Da entwich er"; Zieglschmid, *Chronik*, 477, "Wie das Christus da in das Volck Zum König machen wolt geflohen sy. Item das er nit Erbtailler sein wolt oder Richter da in ainer aus dem Volck bat darzu. Also sollen seine Nachfolger auch thuen"; *Aufdeckung*, C iij a, "Da jn das volck zum zeitlichen König machen wolt vmb jrer zeitlichen gutthaben willen so sy von jm empfangen hetten flohe er vnd wiche von inen. Johan. 6"; Jenny, *op. cit.*, 15, "Christus hat sollen gmacht werden zu einem künig, vnd er ist gfflohen vnd hat nit angesehen die ordnung seines vatters; also sollen wir im auch tun vnd im nach laufen"; *Handlung oder Acta*, *op. cit.*, 83 b, "Er floch Joan, am vj, do sy jn woltend vferwerfen zu einem wältlichen künig"; *Quellen* I, 354, "Da das volk Christo wolt zum künig machen, do floh er"; cf. also the statement by the Anabaptist speaker in Bullinger's *Von dem unverschämpten Frevel*, O ij, "so doch die wort vn das byspil Christi richtig darwider sind."

73 *Handlung oder Acta*, *op. cit.*, 83 b; cf. also *Quellen* I, 179, "Christus habe nie gelebt wie die Obrigkeit, die er als christlich anerkennen würde, wenn sie lebte wie Christus"; Jenny, *op. cit.*, 15, "Auch sagt Petrus: Christus hat gelitten, nit geherrscht, vnd hat vns ein ebenbild gelassen, das jr solt nachfolgen seinen fusstapfen."

inn dem leip sei, dadurch er zerstört werde; dann eyn jeglichs reich, da in jm selbst zerteylt ist, wirt zerstört werden.⁷⁴

(3) The command of Christ is plain in its rejection of participation in governmental offices. The *locus classicus* is Matthew 20:25-27.⁷⁵ This passage proved to the Anabaptists that there are two diametrically opposed principles in the world: governmental authority with its characteristic of power and lordship and the *imitatio Christi* which implies a *lijdszame* persecution by the world.⁷⁶ This is a contrast which cannot be bridged.⁷⁷

The Reformers attempted to counter the Anabaptist charge with examples from the New Testament where Christians apparently had occupied governmental office.⁷⁸ The Anabaptist answered with the concession: "We grant and admit that those of whom you speak came to faith but do not find that they remained in the government" (Wir sagen ia, vnd lassend ouch zu, das die, wie jr erzelt, zum glauben

74 Jenny, *op. cit.*, 15; *Aufdeckung*, C iii j a, "Solt wol noch weyter oder gar von sollichen Propheten weichen so den gedultigen vnd liebhabenden Christum vnder gaistlichen schein mit dem weltlichen gewalt verheyraeten wöllen"; cf. also a supplication of a group of Anabaptists printed in Cornelius Bergmann, *Die Täuferbewegung im Kanton Zürich* (Leipzig, 1916) 63, "Wenn die Obrigkeit den engen und schmalen Weg wandeln kann, das Kreuz auf sich nehmen, wer wolt ihnen ihr amt abschlagen." It is quite clear from these sources that the Anabaptist position was basically one of confronting the magistrate with the claims of Christ as this claim will inevitably compel any Christian to leave his governmental office. Any attempt, therefore, to combine Christ's principles with those of worldly government—which according to Anabaptist understanding could indeed be made—will have to end in failure: Cf. Hans Denck, *op. cit.*, B iiiij b, "Vnd so ferr es möglich were eyner Oberkeyt auch also zu handeln, so möcht sie wol auch Christlich in jm stand sein, Die weil es aber ie die welt nit leiden mag, so sol vnd may eyn freund Gottes nit inn die Oberkeyt sonder drauss wachsen"; Zieglschmid, *Chronik*, 478, "Aber ein Obrigkeit möge wol ein Christ werden So sie sich herab lass vnd die Obrigkeit fleuch wie Christus vnd allein vnderthon sey Zu gueten wercken wie die Apostel leeren."

75 *Acta des Gesprächs*, 232, "Item Matheus 20, Markus 10, schribent wie Jacobus vnd Johannes zwenn der Jüngern dem Herrn christo anmutterten, meinten ir wurde ein vsserlich rich vfrichtenn Nach der wyss der khüngen Judo, Sölte ein zur rechten den andern zur lincken lassen sitzen etc. jr wussent das die weltlichen fürsten beherrschen die völker vnd die Oberherren farent mitt gewalt, Abber vnder üch das ist vnder der gemeind gottes soll es nitt also sind; *ibid.*, 249, "Moses hett das gesatz gefürt vnd wie er gestrafft ist recht gsin, der beuelch gottes, darinn wir noch nütt Sagennt ja vsserthalb dann jm nüwen Seitt Christus jr nitt also"; *Handlung oder Acta*, 84 b, "Wir wend ymerdar das vnderscheyd sye zwüschem dem gewalt des wältlichen regiments, vn der Christlichen kilchen, vs denen worden Christi, da er spricht, Jr aber nit also"; *ibid.*, 89 a, "Diewyl der Herr mit heyteren worten gesagt Jr nit also. Daruss wir nit annderst könnend verstan, dann das es vnder den Aposteln vnd Christlicher gemeind des gewalts vnd regiments nit also solle syn"; *ibid.*, 103, "Wie wir dz schwärdt wölt lend der wält lassen. Das aber jr sölliche Oberkeyt vnder dem volck Gottes wöllend habend wir darwider grund gleyt Matth. xx. Luce xvij, vnd Marci x. Aber vnder üch soll es nitt syn. Desselhalb können wir es noch nit zulassen"; Zieglschmid, *op. cit.*, 302, "Sich er füert die Obrigkeit vnd Herrn der welt sin, vnd spricht drucken, Also soll es nit sein vnd euch"; Joachim Watt, *op. cit.*, 502, "Nun spricht Christus Luce 22. wie weltlichen künig beherschend die völker, vnd die gwaltigen heisst man gnädig herren; ir aber nit also . . . Hie wirt den gläubigen der gewalt abgestrikt"; *Quellen I*, 1064, "Das aber ir obrigkeit nit christen seit oder sein mögt in eurem amt und dienst beweist Christus mit diesen worten, da er sagt: die weltlichen fürsten beherrschen die völker und die oberherren fahren mit gewalt, ir aber nit also." Franz Lau, *Luthers Lehre von den beiden Reichen* (Berlin, 1952) 29, has recently made the interesting statement that Luther rarely used this Scripture verse.

76 Ethelbert Stauffer has ably summarized the theological content of this Anabaptist concept, "Anabaptist Theology of Martyrdom," *MQR XIX* (1945) 179-214.

77 H. Schnell, *op. cit.*, 124, "Der Oberkeit gebürt zu herschen, aber einem Christen den Kelch zu trincken vnd zu leiden, darumb ist herschen vnd ein Christ sein zweyerley."

78 *Acta des Gesprächs*, 252, "Wer ist Joseph vnd Nicodemus gsin, Sind Rattsherrn zu Jherusalem gsin, Lucas 23, Sind sy ouch christen gsin?"; Zieglschmid, *Chronik*, 487, "Da fiengen die pfaften an, Es weren dennoch auch weltlich Obrigkeit im hauss Christi, vnd sagten vom Cornelio, ir wer ein hauptmann gewesen, vnder dem Kriegsvolck vnd er sey ein Christ worden"; cf. also *Handlung oder Acta*, 91 a.

komen; das sy aber an der oberkeit bliben seyend, das manglet vns).⁷⁹ Thereby the Anabaptist understanding of the Scriptures denied the possibility of drawing conclusions from the New Testament regarding the later life of certain magistrates. Rather, they held, it should be inferred that these magistrates became disciples of Christ through their conversion and received new ethical principles. They became members of the body of Christ which is indivisible, of which one part cannot stand against another.⁸⁰

Paul Glock, the Hutterite leader, employs such argumentation:⁸¹ Cornelius and Sergius Paulus quite obviously had been preached the Gospel of Christ and accordingly had learned that they could not be rulers if they wanted to be disciples. "Aus dem allen vnd noch vil meren Haben Cornelius vnd Sergius Paulus, auch alle Christen wol leernen können, das sie nit mer weltliche Fürsten, Herren oder Vögt seind kündten, wolten sie anders Christi nachvolger werden."⁸²

A fourth and final Anabaptist argument against participation in government focused on the radical distinction between the church of Christ and the world. Frequently reference is made to I Corinthians 5:12⁸³ to point out that the Christian has no responsibility for maintaining law and order in the "world."⁸⁴ The "world" is understood as *civitas diaboli*. It is diametrically opposed to the kingdom of Christ whose members are solely to be concerned with the earnest desire to follow Christ.⁸⁵ The true Christian does not have anything to do with the "world," except that the Great Commission is imperative for every Christian. The way the church is related to the world is through missionary effort.⁸⁶

79 *Handlung oder Acta*, 91 b; *ibid.*, 103 b, "Das aber nit wyss vnd Oberen zum glauben kommind, sagint wir nitt: Aber das sy für vnnnd für an der Oberkeyt blyben sind, das findend wir nit"; *ibid.*, 96 a, "Was jr von Nicodemo, Erasto, Paulo Sergio, vnd andern, wie die gläubig worden angezogen, habend jr doch nitt bewysst, das sy für vnd für in jrem stadt belyben syend"; Pilgram Marbeck, *Verantwortung*, 304, "Wer weiss, wie lang den Cornelium der h. geist und sein gewissen volgets, nachdem er zum christen ward, bei solcher hauptmannschaft hab bleiben lassen."

80 *Handlung oder Acta*, 92 a.

81 On Paul Glock cf. *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, vol. II.

82 Zieglschmid, *Chronik*, 488, "Aus dem allen vnd noch vil meren Haben Cornelius vnd Sergius Paulus, auch alle Christen wol lernen können, das sie nit mer weltliche Fürsten, Herren oder Vögt sein kündten, wolten sie anders Christi nachvolger werden."

83 "For what have I to judge them also that are without?"

84 *Codex Kunstbuch*, fol. 240, "Weil der paulus spricht, wz geen vns die dussens an . . . dj nit Christy willen thun, noch nach Inhalt des evangeliums jnn lieb, gedult vnnnd andrer gehorsam wandlen"; Peter Riedemann, *op. cit.*, 330, "Wie Paulus sagt, Was gehn mich die dussigen an, das ich sie richten solle," Hans Denck, *op. cit.* b iiij b, "Dann die daraussen sin (das sind die vnglaubigen) gehen die gemeyn Christi nichts an"; *Eine kurtze einfaltige erkanntnus*, 129, "Also leerend die apostell wol flyssig, das die Christen der Oberkait sollend vndethon syn, aber nitt das sy das wältlich schwärtt selber führen söllnd, dann was gand mich die dussen an."

85 *Aufdeckung*, D a, "Lasst vns darumb sehen das wir Christen bleiben, leiden, vnd den sig des Lammes behalten zu Ehre vnsers Vaters vnd Christi."

86 Wilhelm Wiswedel's study "Die alten Täufergemeinden und ihr missionarisches Wirken," *Archiv f. Ref. Geschichte*, XL (1940) 197 ff., has called attention to the significant missionary activities of the early Anabaptists. It should be kept in mind, however, that evangelistic work was better possible for Anabaptism than for the Reformation which assumed that all baptized persons were members of the church and thus *eo ipso* outside the possibility of evangelism.

The implicit charge of the reformers that such a lack and absence of social responsibility would lead to a breakdown of the civil order was rejected by the Anabaptists. It was their contention that there would always be enough men willing to take over governmental offices.⁸⁷ The Anabaptist refusal to assume office should therefore be interpreted, they said, as having no direct bearing on public law and order.

One of the more poignant expositions of the Anabaptist position is found in the Schleithem Confession. It acknowledges and accepts the state as "an order of God,"⁸⁸ but places it outside the "perfection of Christ." In this perfection of Christ the ban takes the place of the state authority. The Confession establishes a dualism of two distinct realities which are incompatible with each other. Both are equally valid within their respective realms, both have their principles and standards. The work and office of government are utterly necessary in the world, but they are not necessary for the Christian. On the other hand, the law of Christ is clear and absolute, but it has validity only in His church. An Anabaptist spokesman at the Bern disputation of 1538 remarked:

Allso widersprechen wir nitt was vsserthalb dem christenthumb jn der welt ist, das die woll mögen Obern habenn, die Christen aber, werden sich nach dem Euangelium haltten vnnd flibenn.⁸⁹

For the true Christian the power of government, they implied, is power in reserve. To employ a term of physical science, it is "potential energy" which needs not to be realized on account of the high standards of the true followers of Christ.⁹⁰ Scriptural command and pragmatic observation coincide in this point. Should gross sins occur within the Christian brotherhood—the reference to the ban in the Schleithem Confession seemingly indicates that the Anabaptist posi-

87 *Aufdeckung*, D a, "Dörffen nicht sorgen vmb Obrigkeit wir finden herrscher genug, lügen wir nur das wir Christen bleiben gedulden vn den syg des Lambs behalten."

88 Jenny, *op. cit.*, 14.

89 *Acta des Gesprächs*, 232; *Handlung oder Acta*, 78 b, "Wir hand gester gesezt, dz ein weltliche oberkeyt sin sölle zu straff vnd schirm sind wir och gneygt gehorsam zeseyn, darzu sy gesetzet so vil es sich gepürt vnnd es dem Euangelio glich vn gemäss ist. Die Christlichen kilch aber sol vnder jren selbs dz böss straffen nach ordnung des banns"; *ibid.*, 97, "Das wir nit mitzügen könend, das ein wältlich könend, das ein wältlich regiment vn das schwärt in der kilchen Gottes syn sölle, sagend wir nit"; Peter Riedemann, *op. cit.*, 414, "Denn ausser Christo hat der gewalt noch seinen bestand, zum gewissen anzeigen, das gottes zorn noch allweg für vnd für, wider die sündler vnd gotlosen weret"; *Regensburger Stadtarchiv*, "Ob wir wol der Obrigkeit für uns selb nit bedurfftend, da sy ist nit den frumen, sonder den bösen besetzt zufurchten."

90 *Acta des Gesprächs*, 239, "Die mentschenn aber die vss vorcht gottes grosse laster nit vnnderlassen, diebüry, mördery, oder annder laster, denen hett gott verordnet vnnd gesetzet Regenten, Oberkeit, künig, Abder die Christen vnnderlassen diese bösse ding on das, darumb dörffent sy kheiner sölichen Oberkeit"; a negative statement also in Zieglschmid, *Chronik*, 307, "Denn weil sich der gross hauff diser welt Gottes wort nit ziehen vnd regieren lasst, so muess sie das Schwert ziehen vnd regieren."

91 Jenny, *op. cit.*, 14.

tion was not one of perfectionism⁹¹—they are rightly punishable by governmental authority.⁹²

Any discussion of the Scriptural statements on the Christian's relation to governmental power must of necessity refer back to the Old Testament. In the discussion between the Reformation and Anabaptism two aspects took on special emphasis: the historical interpretation of the role of government in the Old Testament, and the relation of such Old Testament teaching to the church of Christ.

The Anabaptists conceded that the Old Testament knows of an intimate relationship of governmental authority with God. "Das der fromme und Gott gefällige David ein König war, das ist unwidersprechlich."⁹³

But while the Anabaptists concurred with the Reformers on one point, they emphatically disagreed on the second: "Unnd hilfft nit das du sagst, Daud sey ein König gewesen, vnnd vil frome haben den gewalt des Schwerts vnnd Kriegs geführt."⁹⁴ Many other Anabaptists repeat this point.⁹⁵ The coming of Christ has brought about a new situation.⁹⁶ This in turn challenges the Anabaptists to point out on numerous occasions the radical distinction between the Old and New Testaments as regards governmental authority. The writer of the Hutterite Chronicle says, "Dieweil nun das Jüdisch Regiment . . . in Christo enndet, auffhöret vnd von inen genumen wirt, So ist offenbar das es in Christo nit mer sein soll."⁹⁷ Wolfgang Brandhuber, another Anabaptist, admonished the brotherhood at Rattenberg am Inn in Austria: "Ir wollet aus Christo keinen mosen machen lassen als jetzt etliche komen, die das schwert erhalten wollen vnd wollen das ein Christ zum Tod urtailen vnd richten, das vns doch das gnädig lämblein nie gelert."⁹⁸

92 Peter Riedemann, *op. cit.*, 413, "Sobald der mensch aber sich wider der sünden begibt, vnd vnrecht thut falt er in zorn vnd fluch, vnd wirt der oberkeit in jre hannd an jm gottes rach zu üben." Fritz Heyer's comment that the Anabaptists felt themselves free of all governmental authority, *op. cit.*, 89, is therefore not quite correct. Unfortunately Franklin Littell repeated this statement, *op. cit.*, 49.

93 *Handbüchlein wider den Prozess*, 10; *Aufdeckung*, B iij a, "Wiewohl sich hie der widertail der götlichen männer als Abraham, Jacob, Moise, David vnd dergleichen behelffen wollen vn sagen, Sy habe auch den gaist Gotes gehept, vn das schwert geführt wider die boss-haftigen, vn wer den gaist Gottes habe der hab auch den gaist Christi."

94 Zieglschmid, *op. cit.*, 303.

95 Cf. *Acta des Gesprächs*, 249, "Da were eins wider das ander, oder hett ouch Moses jnn sinder gmeind christgläubige Lütt gehept?" with the Anabaptist answer, "Ja sind gläubig gsin, Moses hett das ampt geführt das vfgehört."

96 Joachim Watt, *op. cit.*, 502, "Dass aber im alten testament schwert und krieg und oberkeit Got zugelassen hat, wirt uns nit belangen noch binden, dan das gsatz ist ufgehept und ein nüt gebot von Christo geben, dass wir ouch unsere vigend lieben sollend, Matt. 5"; as regards freedom of conscience, *Regensburger Stadtarchiv*, "Dannob wir schon zuegäben das den Oberrn in der gleichen zustraffen, lassen wir geschehen, die weil es knechtisch volck des gesetz ware, da alle genött mit schleglen zueging . . . yetzund aber diser freier predig des Euangelii Christi hat aller Zwang aufgehört."

97 Zieglschmid, *op. cit.*, 296, 299, "Was nun im Zorn geben ist, will sich in Christo dem Segen vnd gad weder füegen noch schicken, vnd ouch des Segens oder Fridens kindt kan der Raach oder des Zorns diener nit sein."

98 Lydia Müller, *op. cit.*, 139.

Peter Riedemann, the Hutterite leader, devoted considerable attention to the problem of the Old Testament. The serious questions regarding the basic unity of the Scriptures raised by the Anabaptist understanding is personified by him in the question: Is the Son against the Father? Thereby he expresses that in the final analysis man is confronted with two revelations of God.⁹⁹ Riedemann points out that behind apparent discrepancies there is a basic unity between the Old and the New Testament. Thus Christ does not abolish the office of human government,¹⁰⁰ even though Schleithem says that He did not maintain the previous divine order (*die Ordnung seines Vaters nicht achtete*);¹⁰¹ that is, He invalidated its significance within certain boundaries.

The Anabaptists rejected the necessity of defense against the attacks of an external foe.¹⁰² They recalled the example of Christ to whose support Peter had wanted to come:

Höre aber was Christus thet; den Petrus vmb leiblicher lieb Christi willen belaidiget vnd schlug, den machet der Herr auch leiblich wider gesund, Lu. 22., so gar wolt der Herr, auch noch nit will, kain hilffe noch lieb, dadurch andern beschedigt oder gehasst mögen werden, ja auch das wir vnser höchste feind nur lieben vnd nit hassen, Lu. 6., ob sy uns wol samentlich und sonderlich belaidigen.¹⁰³

Attention should here be called to the fact that the Reformers thought in different categories. For Luther the ethical norms of behavior need not necessarily be taken from the Sermon on the Mount. The command to love one's enemy might conflict with the command to love one's neighbor and thereby become invalid. Luther knows of a greater responsibility to the neighbor than to the enemy.¹⁰⁴ The Anabaptists, on the other hand, understand Christ's command as equally valid to both neighbor and enemy. They do not find a Scriptural injunction which would designate the social order as a legitimate area of responsibility and entity of Christian ethics.

Anabaptist thinking does not attempt a synthesis which would combine the affirmation of government as a divinely instituted order with its rejection as a legitimate occupation for the true Christian. Such a synthesis would involve the concept of a general moral law

99 Peter Riedemann, *op. cit.*, 409, "Darumb muss sie auch in Christo bleiben, sunst wer der sun wider den vater"; *ibid.*, 410, "Darumb muss man nit so frech reden, das der sun darumb wider den Vater sei."

100 *Ibid.*, 409.

101 Jenny, *op. cit.*, 15.

102 *Aufdeckung*, B iij b, "Weytter schmückt sich die eigennützigkeit mit der lieb des nechsten vnd sagt soll ich meine nechsten (so man jn verderben will) nit zu hilff komen so ichs wol vnderkomen mag dz sey ye ain yeder schuldig zuthun. Got hab es geboten wo ich meinen nechsten in nöten sehe jn nit zuerlassen dann was ich gern habe das sol ich auch wie Mat. 7 eine andern thun."

103 *Ibid.*, B iij b.

104 Karl Holl, *Luther's Stellung zum Krieg* (Tübingen, 1928) has given a full analysis of Luther's position.

which would reject the exercise of power, such as war and bloodshed, even within the civil order. Therefore a basic paradox remains unsolved in Anabaptist thinking. One can safely say that the Anabaptists were not unaware of this fact, but accepted it as a basic truth of the Scripture over which they had no control, and which they could accept only in faith. Paul Glock put the ultimate Anabaptist answer into these words:

Weil euch obrigkeit und gewalt so wunder nimbt, das ir von gott geordnet und eingesetzt seit und solt doch verdampft und nit selig werden in eurem ambt . . . Ja lieber mensch, wer bistu, der mit Gott zanken will? Sagt auch ein werk zu dem, der es macht, warumb machestu mich also? . . . was ist es dann, ob schon gott, als er wolt zorn erzaigen und sein macht kund tuen, mit grosser gedult herfür bracht die geschür des zorns.¹⁰⁵

THE MINORITY WITHIN THE MINORITY

Aside from the numerous testimonies which agree in an emphatic rejection of the Christian's participation in a governmental office, there is evidence in the sources of another small stream of Anabaptist thinking which apparently accepted the entire political ethics of the Reformation and yet considered itself a genuine expression of the Anabaptist movement. The entire matter of the Christian's relation to the state is obviously considered secondary. This is brought out by Hans Nadler:

Und auch der bruder vil unter uns, die wollen, mir solten die schwerter und wer gar hinlegen das hab ich getan, es ist aber doch kein sazung nit, es mags einer dragen aber mags lassen, darnach er stark oder schwag ist im glauben.¹⁰⁶

The most outstanding representative of this group is Balthasar Hubmaier,¹⁰⁷ but there are other testimonies from the entire South German area, such as Zürich, Hesse, Baden.^{107a} This geographical heterogeneity is also brought out by a detailed study of the content. There is evident a wide variety of conviction: Hubmaier's adoption of the political ethics of the Reformers appears alongside the intermediary position of Jacob Gross, who refused to bear arms but consented to do guard duty at the city walls. Chronologically the same variation applies, as the known sources come from the beginning

¹⁰⁵ *Quellen* I, 1062.

¹⁰⁶ *Quellen* II, 136.

¹⁰⁷ The best discussion of Hubmaier's view of the state is given by Carl Sachsse, *Balthasar Hubmaier als Theologe* (Berlin, 1913) 210 ff.

^{107a} *Quellen Zürich*, 334, "Er lasst aber nach, das ein cristenman ein oberer sin mög"; *Quellen* IV, 356, "Vff den 9. artidul ob ain furst oder amptmann sein vnnd also weltliche oberkhait walten anntwurt er: Ja, wann ain furst oder amptmann thue was ime von gott beuoßhenn vnnd leb der leer Christi nach, mög er wol ain guter christ sein vnnd darbey regieren"; *Quellen Hessen*, 75, "Ein christ kunde wol ein oberkeit sein und ein christ kunde wol under oberkeit geleben."

period of the Anabaptist movement as well as from the latter half of the sixteenth century.

One of the significant expressions of this minority group is the *Verantwortung und widerlegung der artikel*, which in close parallel to Luther describes the right attitude of the Christian to the state: "So nu ein christ von der oberkeit gefordert die bösen strafen hilft, hat er nit zu einem bösen, sonder zu einem guten werk geholffen und sein glidmaiss zum waffen der gerechtigkeit begeben."¹⁰⁸

Recent scholarship has advanced the thesis of a different view of the state between the South German and Swiss Anabaptists.¹⁰⁹ The evidence of this minority position even among the Swiss Anabaptists makes it clear that such a distinction is unlikely.

Attention should also be called to the fact that in many instances where seemingly the possibility of occupying a government office is not denied, the command of Christ is at the same time understood so radically that it in effect implies a rejection. It seems as if the Anabaptist spokesmen were at times led by the desire to soften the nature of their position which expressed itself occasionally in a none-too-clear terminology. A government which does not resist evil, does not use the sword against the evildoers, has given up basic elements of its office. This is aptly summarized by an Anabaptist supplication of 1588:

Wollte die Obrigkeit den engen und schmalen Weg wandeln, das Kreuz auf sich nehmen, wer wollte ihnen ihr Amt abschlagen? Sie aber ist ein irdischer Herr . . . der von amts wegen dichten und trachten muss, was zur Mehrung seines Reichs und Erden dient, mit irdischer Gewalt und Macht den Frommen schützen und den Bösen strafen. Deshalb sei Christ sein und Obrigkeit sein und das weltlich Schwert zuwider.¹¹⁰

The two important conclusions which the evidence of a deviating minority group within the Anabaptist movement suggests is that there are two positions aside from the major position treated in this present paper. They run in chronological parallel and are not to be construed as a later softening of the radical position. One stream,

¹⁰⁸ *Quellen Hessen*, 165 ff.

¹⁰⁹ Jan J. Kiewit, *Pilgrim Marbeck, Sein Kreis und seine Theologie* (dissertation Zürich, 1955) 154. Kiewit advances the thesis of a separate group of (Marbeck) Anabaptism in South Germany which held—among other doctrinal differences—the view that a true Christian could exercise governmental authority. For support he quotes a single statement of Marbeck's *Verantwortung*, 304, ". . . es einem Christen schwer sey, ein weltlich oberer ze sein." While it must be admitted that the sentence quoted is not entirely clear in its meaning the immediate context of the quote makes Marbeck's indication quite clear, and does not support Kiewit's interpretation, cf. *supra*, 79; cf. also "Rechenschaft," in *MQR* XII (1938) 197, "Wann aber solh personen, do die obrighait tragen, Christi sind, oder werden (so Ich Inen von herten wunsch vnd pitt) mugen sy sich, solhs hienersteenden leiblichen gewalts, herschung noch Regierung, im Reich cristi nit geprauchten, mag auch durch kain schrift erhalten werden"; *Vermanung* 216, "So bedarff auch keyn warhafter christ, weder stätt, land noch hütt (als jrdische heren) einnehmen, beschutzen noch mit gewalt faren."

¹¹⁰ Cornelius Bergmann, *op. cit.*, 61.

represented by Hubmaier, accepts in full the political ethics of the Reformation, whereas a second stream attempts a synthesis between the Reformation and Anabaptism.

Though one is inclined to suspect the existence of Anabaptist congregations which held such views there is no evidence at hand which would support such a thesis. With the exception of Hubmaier's congregation there is only an *Abred der Diener und Eltesten* as a general doctrinal statement standing representative for a larger group, aside from the *Verantwortung*.¹¹¹

PARTICIPATION IN WAR

One of the fascinating aspects of the 16th century is the widespread interest in the problem of war.¹¹² No doubt this was largely due to the oppressive onslaught of the Turks, who periodically stood outside Vienna and threatened to overrun Western Christendom.¹¹³ It is also due to the general re-evaluation of basic Christian teaching and principles prevalent in that time. It is well known that Luther wrote repeatedly on the question. Zwingli at times was a pacifist. So was Erasmus of Rotterdam and a host of other humanists and spiritualists.¹¹⁴ The early Anabaptists were, therefore, by no means the only group of the Reformation which held a negative attitude toward war, although their position was recognized by well-meaning observers, such as Sebastian Franck and Wolfgang Capito.¹¹⁵ In the attitude toward war the position of Anabaptism with respect to the state seems most clearly expressed. Thieleman J. v. Braght's *Martyrs' Mirror* refers to the Anabaptists as the "defenseless" Christians.¹¹⁶ As late as 1574 it was remarked in a court trial that a certain person could not possibly be an Anabaptist, because he took part in war and legal procedures (*er zere mit und ziehe hinaus und sei vor gericht ein fürsprech, ratsmann oder entenmaier*).¹¹⁷ Again one can call atten-

111 Ernst Müller, *Geschichte der Bernischen Täufer* (Frauenfeld, 1895) 51; *Quellen Zürich*, 109, brings the testimony of Jacob Gross from the first years of the movement, "Uff habint si sich schlechtlich nit wellen weren, och kein gwer tragen, aber wachen."

112 There is as yet no comprehensive study of pacifist thought in the sixteenth century. Valuable studies are Christian Lange, *Histoire de la doctrine pacifique* (Paris, 1927), and Inez Thürlmann, *Erasmus und Ludovicus Vives als Pazifisten* (dissertation Freiburg, 1932).

113 A similar situation arose approximately a century later, when the turmoil of the Thirty Years' War encouraged pacifist thinking such as represented by Christian Hoburg, Paul Felgenhauser, Joachim Bethge, etc.

114 Thürlmann, *Erasmus von Rotterdam*; J. Kvacala, *Deux pacifistes catholiques aux temps de reforme* (Paris, 1928), Walter Köhler, "Ulrich Zwingli und der Krieg," *Christliche Welt* XXIX (1915); Kurt Goldammer, "Friedensidee und Toleranzgedanke bei Paracelsus," *Archiv f. Ref. Geschichte* XLVI (1955).

115 *Basel Stadtarchiv*, M. K. A. 23 a, fol. 1, "Man wollte dann für gottslesterung achten, das die armen leut fürgenommen haben zu meiden das . . . kriegen," Sebastian Franck, *op. cit.*, cccxxxix, "Der meinung seind auch etliche auss den Tüffern, das kein Christ kriegen mög."

116 Thieleman J. van Braght, *The Bloody Theatre or Martyrs' Mirror* (Scottsdale 1951) 1.

117 *Quellen* I, 429.

tion to many Anabaptist statements which point out that a true Christian cannot go to war. Bullinger quotes some Anabaptists as saying

dass die Christen nit söllend gegen jren hasseren vnd widersträbern sich noch jren glauben oder Euangelio mit wältlichen fleischlichen gewalt schwärdt, waaffen oder gegenweer schützen noch vertädigen, anderst dann durch das wort Gottes.¹¹⁸

The basis for the Anabaptist position on war is the example and command of Christ. He is the prince of peace who abolishes in His kingdom the power of the sword and war.¹¹⁹ All the elements of the office of government, which to the Anabaptists indicated that a true Christian may have nothing to do with that office, are brought into focus again in this question. The principles involved in war on the one hand and in being a true disciple of Christ on the other hand are basically incompatible.¹²⁰

The first Anabaptist testimony against participation in war is found in Conrad Grebel's letter to Thomas Müntzer of September 1524: "Man soll ouch das euangelium und sine annemer nit schirmen mit dem schwert oder sy sich selbs. . . . Sy gebruchend ouch weder weltlichs schwert noch krieg, dann by inen ist das tötten gar abgetan."¹²¹ The argumentation of this letter is, surprisingly enough, not based on specific Scripture passages, but affirms the position of the Swiss Brethren group by referring to general principles which, though based on the Scriptures, have already been synthesized to a consistent structure. The origin of such Anabaptist nonresistance still deserves extensive study; most probably it developed in close parallel to the other Anabaptist beliefs.^{121a}

Similar to the Anabaptist understanding of the Old Testament view of governmental authority, it is held that in regard to war, too, a new aeon has come. The Reformation charge that "the saints also warred and protected their laws, religion, and faith and say that David and others also warred" is countered by Jacob Hutter with the comment "at that time the times required it and the Lord also commanded them to hate and exterminate their enemies" (*dazumal die zeit auf ir trueg, und es inen auch der Herr bevalch, ire feind zu hassen und auszureuten*).¹²²

118 *Verantwortung etlicher die man töuffer nennt*, in Heinrich Bullinger's *Der Wiedertöufferen ursprung*, 237.

119 Riedemann, *op. cit.*, "Dieweil nun Christus der fridfürst jm ein reich das ist gmein bereitet, vnd durch sein eigen blut erworben hat, so endet in demselbigen reich, alles weltliche kriegem . . . Derhalben ein Christ weder krieg noch weltlich schwert (raach zu üben) füret."

120 Cf. the reaction of an Anabaptist to the Schmalcaldic War, Johann Adam ed., *Quellen Elsass* (microfilm in Goshen Historical Library), "Wie es christenlich zugenzen, das hat man wol gesehen, seinen eben so böß gewesen, als die andern."

121 Von Mural, *op. cit.*, 17.

121a It should be clear from the above that I am hesitant to concede any close dependence of the Swiss Brethren on Erasmus and Humanism in the matter of nonparticipation in warfare; the similarities are significant, but do not go far enough to justify the assumption of an intimate link. I have attempted a more detailed analysis in my dissertation.

122 Lydia Müller, *op. cit.*, 186.

The Anabaptist sources remain silent on the significant problem as to whether a country can legitimately engage in armed conflicts.¹²³ The Anabaptists seemingly were concerned with the more existential question whether a true Christian can participate in war. This leads to the significant problem of the uniqueness of the Anabaptist position.¹²⁴ Especially in the light of the supposed dependence on Erasmus this problem is important. While Erasmus and other humanists or spiritualist pacifists were essentially concerned about the general problem of war and its impact on society at large, the Anabaptist position is characterized by the dualist character which rejects participation in war basically only for the disciple of Christ.

THE SWEARING OF OATHS

The conflict between the Reformation and the Anabaptists in the area of political ethics focused attention, almost naturally, also on the problem of the oath. Contrary to the question of nonparticipation in war, where due to the absence of universal conscription in the sixteenth century the Anabaptist position remained largely a theoretical one, the problem of the oath was real and pertinent. In numerous examinations¹²⁵ and disputations¹²⁶ state and church inquired about the Anabaptist position, while the Anabaptists themselves set clearly forth their rejection of the oath in their own confessions.¹²⁷

The basis for the Anabaptist position is the order of the Old Testament. The Anabaptists do not deny that God allowed the oath as an affirmation of truth in the Old Testament.¹²⁸ God is truth and therefore He desires that truth shall reign even among His people. God requires the oath as His answer to human untruthfulness. This

123 An indirect reference is given by Marbeck, *Verantwortung*, 217, "So bedarff auch keyn warhafftiger christ, weder stätt, land noch lüt einnehmen . . . dann solches gehört den jrdischen und zeitlichen beherschern zu."

124 This is especially significant as Heinold Fast, "The Dependence of the First Anabaptists on Luther, Erasmus, and Zwingli," *MQR* XXX (1956) 104 ff., has described the pacifism of Erasmus as both christocentric and—at least at times—absolute.

125 *Quellen Hessen*, 263, "Ob er m.g.h. sein huldigungseid getan sagt: nein, er wolle inen auch nit tun"; R. Steck, *op. cit.*, 289, "Damit der oberkeyt by den underthanen die gehorsam genommen, sagten sy, das man der oberkeyt dheinen eyd schweren solte"; *Quellen* I, 149, "Beschweren sich ouch deshalb den aid zu tuen in ansehen, das Christus sagt . . ."

126 *Acta des Gesprächs*, 199, "Eyd Schwerenn. Ob ein Christ ein Rechtgeschaffnen warenn Eyd thun möge"; *Acta oder Handlung*, 106, "Eidschweeren"; Joachim Watt, *op. cit.*, 460, "Zum driten weiss ich eigentlich dass sie aid ze schweren verbietend und söliches kainen zulassend. der ain christ sin wil, on angesehen, was in sölichenn val die eer Gotes oder liebe des nächsten erfordere."

127 *Quellen* I, 144, "Der Widertöufser sagte, man soll keinen Eid schwören." *ibid.*, 179, "Kein Christ könne mit gutem Gewissen zur Bestätigung der Wahrheit einen Eid schwören"; *Quellen* IV, 193, "Da verharren die wiederteuffer auf ihrer meinung, dass gänzlich kein eid zutun sei"; *ibid.*, 327, "Wir handt gott verheissen aller dingen nit zu schwere"; *ibid.*, 379, "Ich hab meinem herren von Fulda keinen Eid und pflicht getan"; *ibid.*, 74, "Gott hab das schweren verbotten"; *ibid.*, 74, "Er hab inn der Huldigung nit geschworen, still gestandenn vnd geschwigen. Gott sage, wehr schwer, der thüe Vnrecht"; *Quellen Zürich*, 319, "Es sol ouch niemen gar nütt schwern, weder eid noch anders."

128 *Acta des Gesprächs*, 199, "jst jnen botten wordenn wann sy sein wahrheit sagenn, das sy söllen vnnd mögen by dem Namen gottes Schwerenn."

in turn parallels the Anabaptist understanding of the order of human government which also represents itself basically as God's answer to human sin and need. The Old Testament oath is God's command to absolute truthfulness.¹²⁹ As truth is only with God such an oath can only be sworn in the name of God.¹³⁰

This Old Testament order, however, has lost its validity for the disciples of Christ. "Aber eidschweren si nit billich. Dan wiewol das gsatz Mosi sölichs zugeben, so welle doch Christus ain anders; denselben aber hab Gott, der himelisch vater, haissen hören, und nit Mosen."¹³¹ Christ's command stands therefore in the center of the Anabaptist argumentation. The reason we do not believe in the oath, says an Anabaptist spokesman at the Bern disputation of 1538, is that Christ has told us so.¹³² The Schleithem Confession, which defines the oath as a "confirmation among those who quarrel," and thereby places it outside the kingdom of Christ, refers to Christ, "who taught the perfection of the law" and prohibits all swearing.¹³³

A second basis for the Anabaptist argumentation is somewhat independent of the example and command of Christ. It argues anthropologically with its emphasis on human weakness and deficiency which, of course, is greatly determined by a definite Scriptural understanding of man's nature. Human weakness stands in distinct contrast to the emphasis on one's own strength, which the oath implies. Man can do neither large nor small things in his own power.¹³⁴ The oath therefore detracts from God's honor, since it affirms an act of man which he cannot perform without the help of God.¹³⁵

The typical dualism of the Anabaptist position regarding the role of government and participation in warfare recurs in the matter of the oath: the distinction between the "world" and the "church of Christ" makes clear that the oath has only become invalid within the church. The high principles of the true Christian make a further affirmation of his words as unnecessary as the actual use of govern-

129 Riedemann, *op. cit.*, 336, "Den gott der die warheit ist. Wil sein volck Israel leren . . . das sy alle jrer reden warnemen vnd achthaben sollen."

130 *Ibid.*, 396, "Darumb in dem als er jne verbeut, bei den götzen der heiden zu schweren, do will er jnen alle lug vnd vnwarheit, vnd eitels geschwetz verboten haben."

131 Joachim Watt, *op. cit.*, 468.

132 *Acta des Gesprächs*, 199. *Handlung oder Acta*, 107 b, "Wil ich vrsache darthun was vnns zu sölichem bewegt hat vass den worten Christi Matth. v. als er oben anzaigt vnd entscheidet die händel des alten Testaments . . . Das ist yetz die ursach das wir vns niemands vnderwerfen mit eydspflichts"; *Quellen* I, 375, "Eidschwören sei von Christus verboten."

133 Jenny, *op. cit.*, 114.

134 *Acta des Gesprächs*, 203, "Dann wir nitt vermögent ob wir Etwas verheissent, das so war gott lebt zethund, dasselb zehalltten. dann vnnsrer kheiner kann Ein einigs har vf sinem houpt wys oder Schwartz machen"; *Quellen Zürich* 335, "Dieweil Cristus heidter gesagt, üwere wort sollen syn ja, nein, unnd dann wir nütziz von vnns selbs vermögen oder haben, sunder thür erkoufft synnd. . . ." Riedemann, *op. cit.*, 398, "das wir aus vnser eigne krefftten weder das kleine noch das grosse vermögen, on was gott inn vnns thut."

135 *Ibid.*, 398, "Wer nun schweret diss oder jhenes zuthun, der greifft got in seine Eer vnd raubet Got was sein ist, den er greifft got. den er schweret diss zuthun, so er doch nichts vermag, vnd darzu nit weiss obs auch got in jm thun wölle."

mental power. In the "world" the oath is as necessary as is government.¹³⁶ It thereby becomes—again in parallel to the office of government—a means of making relative peace and order.¹³⁷ The command to absolute truthfulness remains unchanged: "Es soll sich auch niemand mit Ja oder Nein übereilen, dieweils nun Erlaubtnus ist: dann wer jemand mit Ja gantz vergewissen und versichern will, der hat schon geschworen."¹³⁸

In another respect the Anabaptists have somehow pointed out the dilemma of the modern oath in a secularized society—for the Anabaptists the society even of the 16th century was secularized. Any religious oath presupposes the existence of an objective means of evaluation. God is to interfere with a false oath. Else there is little justification for using God as witness. The modern dilemma arises because the loss of eternal salvation may not always be significant to secularized man. The 16th century Anabaptists were unique in their belief that God is not immanent in the world in the way that the oath presupposes. Since there is no objective means to verify an oath, there is no legitimate reason for the oath.^{138a}

Thus the Anabaptist argumentation is twofold. It argues the impossibility of the oath due to scriptural commands, human weakness, and absence of objective validation. But it also concedes that the world may use it as it may be a means of relative peace.

SUMMARY

A brief summary must attempt to relate the major findings of this paper to the context not only of the Reformation but the history of Christian thought throughout the centuries. On the basis of the evidence at hand it becomes imperative to view the Anabaptist position in regard to the state as the deliberate outcome of a thorough, systematic and basically consistent understanding of the Scriptures. We go amiss when we consider this position as the more or less inci-

136 *Quellen Hessen*, 395, "Er wisse dem fursten nicht zu verdenken, das ehr von seinem untanen eid und pflicht nehme, Er wehre wol gut, das sie ihm gehorsamer und fromer wehren, ehr aber wolle keinen eid tun, man werde ihn einen christen bei nein und ja lassen"; *Acta des Gesprächs*, 206, "Ich weiss woll das die welt, vnnd chisten von einandern vnnderscheidenn vnnd ob woll die mitt dem eyd binden muss, Schwerent, halltten Sv es dennoch khum, Jch sag aber von den christen, dennen hatt christus gesagt, jr sollent aller dingen nit Schweren."

137 *Ibid.*, 216, "Aber vsserhalb diennett er woll zu fryd vnnd Ruwenn wo vsserhalb zänckische ding Sind, mag der eyd das vfhenn, das bedarf es aber by den Christen nit." This similarity was well expressed by Hans Denck, *Von der wahren Liebe* (Quellen und Forschungen zur Reformationsgeschichte XXIV, Gütersloh, 1956), 83, "Aus disem mag leicht ermessen werden, wie es stehe numb . . . schweren oder geloben, uber die bösen herrschen und dergleichen, nemlich die Gott umb bessers willen bei der welt gduldet . . . aber bie denen, so die warheyt erkennen oder vermessen sich, alss ob sie es erkennen, lasset er sie anders nit geschehen." Hut's treatise includes a concise summary of the Anabaptist position as outlined here. His famous "widerruff," *op. cit.*, 110, "Von dem eyd," does not renounce this view.

138 Ludwig Schwabe, "Ueber Hans Denck," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, XII (1891) 461.

138a Otto Bauernfeind, *Eid und Friede* (Stuttgart, 1956), is the attempt at a re-evaluation of the Christian basis for the oath with a thorough analysis of the modern dilemma.

dental byproduct of a Biblical naiveté which is not aware of the complexities of social life. This does not mean, however, that all the Anabaptists of the 16th century were aware of the full implications of the problem or had fully comprehended the basic structure of the Anabaptist concept. In fact, there is enough evidence to point to the contrary.¹³⁹ But this fact, which could be applied with equal strength to the other great movements of the Reformation, does not alter the basic insight of a few who, it may well be said, succeeded in reformulating what might be called a basic Christian answer to the problem of human government. It also should be pointed out that the Anabaptist position does not imply a simple yielding to circumstances, that is an *ex post facto* justification for what was beyond their practical reach in the first place.

The first major significance of this Anabaptist view of the state is found in the resolute rejection of the *Corpus Christianum* concept which neither Luther nor Zwingli found possible to do away with.¹⁴⁰ John Horsch first called attention to the fact that the first break between the Grebel group and Zwingli occurred over the issue of a "state-church system" in Zürich.¹⁴¹ While this view was emphatically challenged by two distinguished European scholars,¹⁴² Köhler and von Muralt, it must stand basically proved: Grebel and his associates objected to the numerical identity of church and state which indeed existed in Zürich, where state and church worked together in many matters.¹⁴³ Zwingli, on the other hand, felt that the City Council of Zürich should have a word to speak and should determine, in the final analysis, the course of the Reformation in Zürich. The emphatic Anabaptist rejection of such a union, the insistence that a true Christian could not have anything to do with the governmental order, that the church which is composed of voluntarily dedicated believers, and the state, are two distinct entities and not numerically identical—all this vindicates over a thousand years of Western civilization and opened a new era of separation of state and church.¹⁴⁴

A second significance seems to lie in the particular understanding of the Scriptures which underlies the Anabaptist view of the state.

139 The wide range of belief which becomes evident through a study of the *Täuferakten* seems to substantiate this feeling.

140 Two recent studies are Brigitte Brockelmann, *Das Corpus Christianum bei Zwingli* (Breslau, 1938), and Kurt Matthes, *Das Corpus Christianum bei Luther im Lichte seiner Erforschung* (Berlin, 1929).

141 John Horsch, "The Rise and Early History of the Swiss Brethren Church," *MQR* VI (1932) 169 ff.

142 Leonhard von Muralt, "Zum Problem: Täuferum und Reformation," *Zwingliana*, VI (1934) 65 ff.; Walther Köhler, "Das Täuferum in der neueren kirchenhistorischen Forschung," *Archiv f. Ref. Geschichte* XXXVIII (1940) 101 ff.

143 The Anabaptist Marx Bosshard put this into the words, "Meine Herren sehen dem Zwingli durch die Finger und der Zwingli meinen Herren," Emil Egli, *Die Züricher Wiedertäufer* (Zürich, 1872) 97.

144 Walther Köhler, *Dogmengeschichte* (Zürich, 1951) 86.

As was pointed out above, the conflict between the Anabaptists and the Reformers had to lead quite obviously to the problem of the government in the Old Testament. This in turn inevitably raised the question of the validity of the Old Testament *post Christum*. It is not at all surprising that we encounter in Anabaptist discussions of the state frequent references to the problem of rightly understanding the Old Testament.¹⁴⁵ Vice versa, in Anabaptist discussions of the nature of the Old Testament the issue of governmental authority is frequently used as reference.¹⁴⁶ In the Frankenthal disputation an Anabaptist stated that they had been asked to cite an illustration which contradicted Moses and the Prophets, and he replied that Moses drew the sword, but Christ taught to put away the sword and to love one's enemy.

The Anabaptist view of the state, more so than any other realization of the "Anabaptist Vision," suggests an understanding of the Scriptures that might aptly be termed as a New Testament monism. This understanding relates the Old Testament to the Gospel of Christ in a way which was unknown to the Reformers.¹⁴⁷

That the New Testament monism possesses such significance is further borne out by a comparison with Luther. Luther's ethical emphasis on the Old Testament has been pointed out by such scholars as Troeltsch, Meinecke, and Wunsch, though it has not remained uncontested by Holl.¹⁴⁸ It is known that Luther saw nothing wrong in a Christian's participation in warfare. The justification for this can certainly not be sought in a painful compromise between the high law of Christ and the low standards of the world for which Luther felt responsible. The answer lies rather in the fact that Luther found in the Old Testament another stream of Biblical teaching which he considered of equal validity.¹⁴⁹

Finally attention must be called to the Anabaptist dualism between the Kingdom of Christ and the "world." The Anabaptist concept of justification, the view of the church, and their understanding of governmental authority combine to form a radical protest against the medieval synthesis of the kingdom of Christ and the world.¹⁵⁰

145 Riedemann, *op. cit.*, 324 ff.

146 Cf. *Frankenthaler Religionsgespräch*, 18, "Wir sollen etwas fürbringen, so Moses vnd die Propheten gelehret haben, dass der Lehr Christi zuwider: Nun zuckt Moses das Schwert, vnnnd übet Rach, Christus heisset das Schwert einstecken, vnd den Feind liebehaben."

147 *Frankenthal*, *op. cit.*, 13, "Wie vil nun auss dem alten Testament mag bewisen werden, dass der Lehr Christi nit zuwider, Nemen wir glaubwidrig an."

148 Ernst Troeltsch, *Soziallehren der Christlichen Kirchen und Gruppen* (Tübingen, 1912) 494 ff; George Wunsch, *Die Bergpredigt bei Luther* (Tübingen, 1920); Friedrich Meinecke, "Luther über christliches Gemeinwesen," in *Historische Zeitschrift* CXXI (1919) 22; an opposing view was held by Karl Holl, *Der Neubau der Sittlichkeit* (Tübingen, 1925).

149 *Weimarer Ausgabe*, 18, 81, 8-17; cf. also 30, 23; 225, 24.

150 *Acta des Gesprächs*, 211, "Wir wüssent woll wie ein vnderscheid ist zwüschen Tag vnnnd nacht, liecht vnnnd vinster, Also ist ein vnderscheid zwüschent der welt, vnnnd Christen."

The "world" takes on almost sociological and geographical dimensions and does not fall—as with Luther—into the inside of the Christian individual with the *simul justus, simul peccator* doctrine. Or, to use Augustine's terminology, the *civitas terrenæ* becomes *civitas diaboli*.¹⁵¹

Walther Köhler's insistence that the essence of the Anabaptist movement should be seen within the context of the struggle between Christianity and culture¹⁵²—or the ethic of culture versus the ethic of the Sermon on the Mount—should receive further attention, even though it may fail to reach the core of the Anabaptist genius. It is certainly evident that the Anabaptist movement of the sixteenth century can hardly be understood without adequate consideration of its radical rejection of the existing contemporary envioning culture.

It has been said that it was the unfortunate fate of the 16th century Anabaptists to have entered history 400 years too early. The study of the Anabaptist view of the state seems to prove this statement. The separation of church and state, the concept of religious freedom, nonparticipation in armed conflict are issues which the prevalent climate of contemporary modern opinion views in a different light.

¹⁵¹ Robert Friedmann's "The Doctrine of the Two Worlds" in *The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision* points in this direction and deserves further study and attention by Anabaptist scholarship.

¹⁵² Walther Köhler, *Dogmengeschichte*, 86; *Corpus Reformatorum*, XCL, 161.

EDITORIAL

(Continued from page 82)

"Christian Responsibility to the State." The paper is marked by a keen analysis of the issues, a full awareness of the problem, and clarity of expression, but most of all by a deep sense of responsibility to the Christian commitment under Christ. There is something to be said for a still more radical position than that taken by Neufeld, but the implicit meaning of his conclusions must be quite radical.

THE NATURE OF THE CHURCH ACCORDING TO THE RADICAL CONTINENTAL REFORMATION ¹

JAMES LEO GARRETT*

Franklin H. Littell's *The Anabaptist View of the Church* (1952) is the most thorough delineation of that trend in contemporary scholarship which finds the essence of Anabaptism in its concept of the church. In particular, Littell interprets the Anabaptist movement from the focal point of the fall and restitution of the true church. Although his volume contains references to the Spiritualists and Anti-Trinitarians, these are to an extent outside the scope of its subject matter.² Furthermore, Littell's primary purpose is not the exposition of Anabaptist ecclesiology, but rather the interpretation of Anabaptism from the standpoint of its historically and apologetically oriented doctrine of the true church (*die rechte Kirche*).³ Littell's work should stimulate further studies of the ecclesiology of the entire "radical" wing of the sixteenth century Reformation. This essay is a preliminary attempt to mark out some of the areas which call for additional study and which are of significance for the understanding of the church in the twentieth century. First, the question will be raised as to what, if anything, the Anabaptists, the Spiritualists, and the Anti-Trinitarians had in common in their understanding of the Christian church. Secondly, an effort will be made to demarcate some distinct concepts of the church. These ecclesiological types are construed, not from the total theology of their advocates, but, so far as possible, from the concept of the nature of the church alone. Finally, the nature of the church will be further examined by reference to the basic affirmations made and analogies applied to the church. Here primary, though not exclusive, attention will be given to the Anabaptists.

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¹ This essay is an effort to restate on the basis of the sources the concepts of the nature of the Christian church which were set forth in the radical wing of the Reformation on the continent of Europe during the period from 1521 to 1575. Since discussions concerning the church today are legion and since the "left-wing" of the Reformation, long neglected and misinterpreted, is now being given serious study by competent scholars, it may be said that this essay is concerned with the juncture of these two contemporary trends.

The term "Radical Reformation," employed by George H. Williams, ed., *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers*, "Library of Christian Classics," vol. XXV (Philadelphia, 1957) 19-22, is used in this essay in preference to the term "left-wing" Reformation, used by John T. McNeill, "Left Wing Religious Movements" in *A Short History of Christianity*, ed. by Archibald G. Baker (Chicago, 1940) 127-32, and by Roland H. Bainton, "The Left Wing of the Reformation," *Journal of Religion*, XXI (1941) 124-34. The application of "left" to this phase of the Reformation was not inaugurated by McNeill and Bainton, for Thomas Armitage in his *A History of the Baptists* (New York, 1887), p. 399, quoted an article on "Anabaptists" in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* as follows: "Anabaptism, as a system, may be defined as the Reformation doctrine, carried to its utmost limit; the Anabaptists were the extreme left of the army of the Reformation." *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers* hereafter cited as *SAW*.

² On the Spiritualists, cf. Littell, *op. cit.*, especially pp. 34-39, and on the Anti-Trinitarians, especially pp. 62 f. Cf. Littell, "Spiritualizers, Anabaptists and the Church," *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, XXIX (January, 1955) 34-43. Hereafter cited as *MQR*.

³ Anabaptist concepts and usage would seem to make *die rechte Gemeinde* preferable to *die rechte Kirche*.

I.

THE COMMON DENOMINATOR: THE FALL OF THE TRUE CHURCH

The religious climate of sixteenth century western Europe, in which Anabaptists, Spiritualists, and Anti-Trinitarians came into being, was that of the challenge of Roman institutional Christianity, first at the point of its practices and then with respect to its teachings—chiefly its principle of authority and its soteriological doctrine, together with that of a Protestant reconstruction on the basis of *Volkskirchen* that purposely did not basically alter the fundamental nature of the church. A study of Anabaptist, Spiritualist, and Anti-Trinitarian writings shows that in each movement criticism of the Roman and Protestant churches was a prominent feature. These criticisms only rarely proceeded from what may be called abstract ecclesiological principles alone. In fact, the moral and religious conditions within Roman and Protestant churches often formed the center of the polemic.⁴

The concept of a fallen or corrupted Christendom was a recurrent theme among the radical writers. Yet, when did this fall occur? From Polish Anabaptism comes the record of the dating of the fall of Christendom "with the death of Simeon, the last of the grand old men who had known Jesus and the Twelve," in A.D. 111 on the basis of Eusebius.⁵ Sebastian Franck wrote in 1531 concerning an alteration of "the outward church of Christ" which occurred "right after the death of the apostles" or fourteen hundred years before, i.e., A.D. 131. The outward church, according to Franck, "went up into heaven and lies concealed in the Spirit and in truth," and for fourteen centuries "there has existed no gathered church nor any sacrament."⁶ The question as to whether this is, for Franck, the fall or the "maturation" of Christianity has been rightly raised by George H. Williams.⁷ Franck's concept seems to have influenced John Campanus, and through Campanus it seems to have been transmitted to the Wasenberger preachers and Bernard Rothmann of Münster.⁸ Thomas Müntzer affirmed that the Christian church "did not remain a virgin any longer than up to the time of the death of the disciples of the apostles and soon thereafter became an adultress."⁹ More common among radical writers is the dating of the fall of the true church in

⁴ *Infra*, 40.

⁵ Earl Morse Wilbur, ed., *A History of the Polish Reformation by Stanislaus Lubieniecki*. MSS, p. 33, cited by Littell, *op. cit.*, pp. 62, 126. Cf. Eusebius, *Historia Ecclesiae*, III, 32.

⁶ "A Letter to John Campanus," *SAW*, p. 149.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 149, n. 11.

⁸ Campanus' *Contra totum post apostolos mundum* (1529) is not extant. His *Restitution* was written in 1532. Rothmann wrote *Restitution rechter und gesunder christlicher Lehre* and *Bekenntnisse van beyden sacramenten* (1533) after Henrik Rol had called his attention to Campanus' *Contra*. . . Cf. Littell, *op. cit.*, pp. 40, 73.

⁹ "Sermon Before the Princes," *SAW*, p. 51.